

SCIENCE FACT AND FICTION SPECIAL

Rod Serling's
THE TWILIGHT ZONE
Magazine

October 1987

EXPLORING
**INNER
SPACE**

**FREDERIK
POHL**

ON
BIOFUTURES

**GREG
BEAR**

AN EXCERPT FROM
"THE FORGE
OF GOD"

FICTION BY
**LUCIUS SHEPARD
ALAN BRENNERT
WILLIAM F. WU
RICHARD PAUL
RUSSO**

**PHILBERG
REVIEW**

**THE ART OF
JIM BURNS**

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IN THE TWILIGHT ZONE

Physics and Metaphysics

Welcome to Inner Space.

What you're holding in your hands is the first issue of *The Twilight Zone* devoted exclusively (well, all right, almost exclusively) to science fiction. We've done it as a sort of stretching exercise, to open up the magazine to a broader range of fiction, more like the range of the original *Twilight Zone* television program.

As Marc Scott Zicree, author of *The Twilight Zone Companion*, points out in his essay "Science Fiction in The Twilight Zone," in this issue, about a third of all the episodes aired on the show dealt with science fictional themes. So you'll be seeing a bit more sf in future issues of the magazine. But it will be sf of a very special sort, the kind that deals with those internal landscapes British author J.G. Ballard termed "inner space"—stories with a human dimension about the impact of scientific change on our everyday lives. And, because this is *The Twilight Zone*, there will also be stories that cross that thin line between science and magic, physics and metaphysics.

Several of the stories in this issue deal with Inner Space in another sense—the microscopic realm of particle physics, biological engineering, and the workings of the human mind. If the dominant metaphor of the Golden Age of science fiction was the Machine, a large and complex device which an engineer could master through his technological expertise, the subject of much of the best science fiction being written today is the microcosm; the

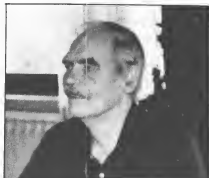
world inside. Science has now made it possible for us to rearrange matter on a subatomic level—to create sophisticated new microchips, synthesize powerful new chemicals, even alter our genetic makeup—and confronted us with a host of new problems.

Biofutures

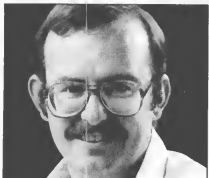
The brave new world of biotechnology provides the subject of our nonfiction feature this issue. Award-winning novelist, editor, and futurist Frederik Pohl, discusses the consequences of our newfound power to tinker with the stuff of life itself. His essay "Biofutures" holds warning as well as promise, since we have plunged headlong into the new technology without resolving the difficult ethical dilemmas it has raised.

Pohl's concern with these issues also imbues his newest work, *Chernobyl: A Novel*, a fictional reconstruction of the nightmarish events of April 1986 and their aftermath, to be published in Bantam Spectra hardcover later this fall.

Greg Bear, who explored inner space in his award-winning novel *Blood Music*—about a plague of intelligent microorganisms—turns his attention to the ecology of the universe in our exclusive preview of his forthcoming novel *The Forge of God* (Tor Books). In his introductory essay, "Galactic Checks and Balances," Bear speculates on the mystery of why humanity has not yet met other intelligent species, and offers one terrifying scenario of what we might expect when, at last, we do. Bear, his wife Astrid, and son Erik, have just



Frederik Pohl



Greg Bear

relocated from San Diego to Seattle. He recently won the Nebula Award for his short story "Tangents," and his newest novel, *Eternity*, will be published next year by Warner Books.

The end of the world is also the theme of our second science fiction novelette, "Voices in the Earth" by Alan Brennert. The story represents a first for us: the first original story based on a teleplay for the new *Twilight Zone* television series. (The episode airs this summer on CBS.) Brennert ("Her Pilgrim Soul," February 87), who adapted Greg Bear's short story "Dead Run" for the new show, has recently completed his second novel, *Far from Home*, and is currently developing several sf and fantasy projects for television.

Contact

Several stories in this issue concern the possibility (and difficulty) of communication with other beings, terrestrial and extraterrestrial. Richard Paul Russo ("Dead Man on the Beach," June '87) offers a powerful novelette about a survey crew who discovers an ancient evil buried on an alien world in "Mad City Beneath the Sands." His first novel, *Inner Eclipse*, will be published by Tor Books later this fall.

William F. Wu's "Davi Leiko till Midnight" is a bittersweet tale of a man who falls in love with his creation. Wu's "Wong's Lost and Found Emporium," a finalist for the Hugo, Nebula, and World Fantasy Awards, was adapted as an episode of the new *Twilight Zone* series. His first novel, *MasterPlay*, will be pub-

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Alan Brenner



William F. Wu



A. R. Morlan



Jay Sheckley

lished this fall by Warner Books.

A.R. Morlan ("Pillaging Poe," February '86), who has established a reputation as a skilled author of the darker sort of horror with her tales in *Night Cry*, *Horror Show*, and *Grue*, here gives us "The Cuttlefish," a poignant story of interspecies communication which she has dedicated to the memory of Theodore Sturgeon.

And, on the lighter side, we have two tongue-in-cheek tales of first contact, Barry N. Malzberg's "Ambition" and Jay Sheckley's "Alien Mail to the White House." Malzberg, author of more than twenty science fiction novels, most recently *The Remaking of Sigmund Freud* (Del Rey), was last seen in TZ with "Bringing it Home" (February '87), co-authored with Jack Dann. Jay Sheckley, whose last TZ story was "Juleeeeeeeeeee!" (October '86) written in collaboration with Robert Sheckley, has recently married Jack Rems, owner of Berkeley's Dark Carnival bookstore. Her short fiction has also appeared recently in *Night Cry*, and in Marvin Kaye's *Devils and Demons* anthology (Doubleday).

We are also pleased to present Lucius Shepard's acclaimed short story "Delta Sly Honey," first published earlier this year in *In the Field of Fire*, the critically acclaimed anthology of Vietnam war fiction edited by Jeanne Van Buren Dann and Jack Dann. Shepard, last seen here with "The Exercise of Faith" (June '87), was this year's Nebula Award winner for his novella "R&R."

Our *Twilight Zone* Gallery this issue features the remarkable artwork of

British illustrator Jim Burns, whose designs were featured in the film *Blade Runner*. To tie it all together, Contributing Editor James Verniere takes an inside look at the appropriately titled new sf comedy *Innerspace*, a sort of *Fantastic Voyage* take-off directed by Joe Dante for Steven Spielberg's Amblin Productions. And, to add just the right note of quantum weirdness to the proceedings, we also offer a sneak preview of the new punk-vampire film *Lost Boys*; and *Ultimate Getaways*, an introduction to "New Age" spiritual pilgrimages by Mark Arnold. Arnold, who contributes frequently to our *Illuminations* and *The Other Side* columns, is the co-editor with Terry Windling of the World Fantasy Award-winning *Elsewhere* fantasy anthologies. He is currently at work on a new novel.

TZ First

Finally, here's an early word for TZ readers on an exciting new writing contest we'll be explaining more fully next issue. Beginning in February 1988, each issue of *The Twilight Zone* will contain at least one "TZ First," an original story by an author who has never before been professionally published. At the end of the year, our readers will be asked to vote on the best stories of the year. The winners will receive special prizes, including a Windjammer Cruise. To find out how you can be eligible, read the December issue of *The Twilight Zone*, on sale September 28.

-TK

THE TWILIGHT ZONE Magazine

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BOOKS

by Edward Bryant

After the Zap by Michael Armstrong
Runespear by Melinda Snodgrass and Victor Milán
Wild Card Run by Sara Stamey
The Jaguar Hunter by Lucius Shepard
The Year's Best Science Fiction: Fourth Annual Collection edited by Gardner Dozois
The Best of the West edited by Joe R. Lansdale
Friends of the Horseclans edited by Robert Adams and Pamela Crippen Adams
Tempus by Janet Morris
Cascade Point by Timothy Zahn
New Destinies edited by Jim Baen
Isaac Asimov Presents the Great SF Stories: 16 edited by Isaac Asimov and Martin H. Greenburg
Science Fiction in Print: 1985 by Charles N. Brown and William G. Contento
The Stars My Destination by Alfred Bester
Dead in the West by Joe R. Lansdale
The Maker of Dune edited by Tim O'Reilly
The Nightmare on Elm Street Companion by Jeffrey Cooper
Rumors of Spring by Richard Grant
Guardians of the West by David Eddings
Aegypt by John Crowley

It wasn't very many months ago that Terry Carr and I were staying in adjacent rooms at a hotel in Tucson. For a long time, I'd known that we shared similar tastes in movies. There was a time when it seemed that Terry and I were the only people in science fiction who had seen *Two Lane Blacktop* and shared identical (high) opinions of Warren Oates.

It turned out in Tucson that Terry and I also shared the same make and model of portable glucometer. Terry



needed some reagent strips. I gave him a supply out of my own stash. Aside from the medical aspects, it was an extraordinarily good weekend. That was the last time I saw Terry. He died not long ago of congestive heart failure aggravated by his diabetes. April seventh, in Oakland. Age fifty.

In sf, his legacy was a first-rate novel (*Cirque*) and a handful of fine short stories, most of which were collected in *The Light at the End of the Universe*. Beyond that comparatively small amount of work, his influence will be felt for a long, long time. He was one of the most admirable and effective editors in the field. As evidenced by such books as the *Universe* original anthology series, the old and the new Ace sf Specials, and a raft of reprint anthologies, Terry proved his taste both highly eclectic and nigh unto impeccable. He had the gift of choosing fiction which was not only literate, often challenging, but something readers wished to purchase and read. That's not an easy compromise to reach.

About the time you read this,

Doubleday will be releasing the final *Universe* Terry edited for them. Ace will be publishing first novels in his Specials series by Loren MacGregor, Richard Kadrey, and Claudia O'Keefe. Maybe others. I don't know.

I miss Terry. I will miss reading the fiction he will no longer be choosing to publish. Warren Oates is dead too. Damn.

Here's a first novel that I think Terry Carr would have approved. It's Michael Armstrong's *After the Zap* (Questar, 256 pp., \$2.95, ISBN 0-445-20-438-9). Armstrong is one of Alaska's handful of sf writers and he has put his home solidly into a work of surpassing entertainment.

After the Zap is an incredibly manic after-the-bomb tale like none other I've read. It takes place five years after the EMP from nukes exploded high in the atmosphere has wiped out most high tech equipment—and worse, has scrambled peoples' brains. Long-term memory is a thing of the past. Survivors' cognitive abilities are spotty and unpredictable. Is this any way to rebuild a civilization? the author asks. Yes.

Holmes Weatherby III is hell-bent on trekking north, on an errand he can't consciously define. He becomes involved with the crew of *The Wonder Blimp*, a group who take quite literally to heart the suggestion of Petra Kelly—former head of the West German Green Party—that maybe nuke missile launch codes ought to be embedded in the hearts of innocent children. Politicians would have to eviscerate kids in order to start a war. This is only the beginning of a labyrinthine plot and a large cast of weird, exotic, amusing, and sometimes appalling characters. Holmes also has to deal with Lucy a cyberpunk heroine if there ever was one; bush punks, Bear

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Baiters, mercs, hyperdogs (sled dogs bred for short-distance teleportative ability), Eskimos, and a profusion of plotters and conspirators.

I can't remember when I've been so entertained. Frankly, I don't think everything in *After The Zap* makes sense. Sometimes I couldn't decide whether certain contradictions were the author's fault, or simply the result of narrator Holmes's strange perceptions. In any case, the book is a frenetic and accomplished magical act that somehow works. If there's any justice in the Philip K. Dick Award system this year, *After The Zap* is a sure bet for consideration.

Questar has also published a collaborative novel by Melinda Snodgrass and Victor Milán. It's *Runespear* (278 pp., \$3.50, ISBN 0-445-20247-5) and I quite enjoyed eighty-five percent of it. This is a studied attempt at writing an entertainment in the Indiana Jones mold, without making the blood-lines either too obvious or derivative. Authors Snodgrass and Milán do a good job of turning the conventions, if not upside down, at least sideways.

The time is 1936 and three visitors to Berlin find themselves impressed by Heinrich Himmler into a mad scheme to recover the fabled spear of Odin from a stash of Norse booty supposedly hidden deep in the frozen heart of Greenland. The trio of bickering colleagues includes a Harrison Ford sort of adventurer, a female American wire service reporter, and a fiftyish British professor.

Does the hero wind up with the girl? Nope. Is the female lead young, beautiful, and vapid? Not exactly. We find out she's a little longer in the tooth and with a little more character than we'd suspected. Is the professor a doddering old stereotype? Uh uh. He gets the girl. Sort of.

The real strength of *Runespear* is the clear knowledge and interest the collaborators have in the backdrop of their novel. This is a well-researched, quite nicely sketched period piece. It is only very occasionally that a slip-up appears—well, truthfully I found only one. The authors apparently think that "gunsel" is a generic hard-boiled term for second-banana tough guys. At the time, a more accurate synonym would have been "faggot." Read Chandler again.

I mentioned that I liked eighty-five percent of the book. The breakpoint comes on page 237 when fantasy finally rears its fly head and a troll appears. The switch in emphasis from

reality to unreality is jarring. Not fatal, but noticeable. I realize that something akin to that device was necessary so that the book could be published by Questar, bought by folks such as you, and reviewed in magazines such as this. But maybe the balance could have been more craftily adjusted. Aside from that cavil, I'd



most enthusiastically await another team effort from Milán and Snodgrass.

Sara Stamey's *Wild Card Run* (Berkley, 232 pp., \$2.95, ISBN 0-425-09705-6) is one of those slush-pile first novels that occasionally graces an acquisition editor's desk and brightens her (or his) day. Clearly here's a woman who's got a lot on the ball and should be encouraged. *Wild Card Run* is a novel of planetary intrigue set in a cybernetically governed future, on a world where the acutely conservative inhabitants practice both very fundamental religion and an interesting variation of polyandry. The female protagonist is an expatriate daughter who has returned from off-world on a spy mission. As in any good melodrama, all is not as the protagonist (Ruth Kurtis) perceives, nor is everyone who (or what) she thinks they are.

This is one of those books that suggests more about the writer's future than it actually delivers on its own. All the pieces of a decent novel are here, but with rough edges that will likely be smoothed off in successive books. There are a few too many words. There are anachronisms: "forwarded and battered letters" are physically transported from world to world. So much for MCI Mail in the future. A kid in this distant time and

place says things like, "Jeez Louise." Come on. Petty things, but irritating. I'm sure Sara Stamey will work through them.

If I were on the Nebula jury this year, would I push *Wild Card Run* to be added to the final ballot? Probably not. But will I pick up and read Sara Stamey's second novel? Better believe it.

As ever, one of the glories of science fiction is the short story form. The publishers grouse about the unsalability of story collections, yet in climates of both boom and bust, the reprint and original anthologies continue to crop up like mushrooms after a rain. Here's just a sampling from a month or so.

It seems as though Lucius Shepard has always been with us. Was it only 1980 when he was just a callow (hah!) youth at the Clarion Writers' Workshop? And just 1983 when his short fiction started appearing in virtually every market of consequence in sf? And 1984 when his novel *Green Eyes* was published as the second in Terry Carr's revived Ace Specials series? And 1985 when he was given the John W. Campbell Award for best new writer? My, how time flies. I know some writers who have taken that long just to finish their initial short story.

Shepard's first story collection is available. It's called *The Jaguar Hunter* (Arkham House, 404 pp., \$21.95, ISBN 0-874054-136-4). There's no question about it—this is one of the must-buys of the year. Here collected are eleven stories. If there seems a strange sense of déjà vu hanging over them, it may be because most were award nominees and/or included in best-of-the-year anthologies.

"Salvador" and "R&R," representing Shepard's series of pieces about a projected U.S. involvement in a Vietnamlike war in Central America, are included. They whet the appetite for his long-awaited novel *Life During Wartime*, soon to arrive from the Bantam New Fiction program.

Shepard's experience with Latin America also deeply colors such tales as the title piece, "Black Coral," "Mengele," "A Traveler's Tale," and "The End of Life As We Know It." He makes forays into dark fantasy, twisting it to his own ends in "How the Wind Spoke at Madaket" and "The Night of White Bhairab." The book ends on a high note with the (in the truest sense of the word) fabulous "The Man Who Painted the Dragon Griaule" and the morality play, "A Spanish Lesson."

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This is an exemplary collection by a fine writer, and a bargain to boot. Arkham House has done its customary fine job of production, including the excellent jacket and interior illustrations by Jeffrey K. Potter. Potter's is one of the finest, most distinctive talents in contemporary fantasy illustration—and the strangeness of his work perfectly fits the tones of Shepard's fiction.

If you don't have the time or inclination (not to mention the budget) to seek out the original story appearances of such as Lucius Shepard, one quick fix is to pick up the current volume of Gardner Dozois's best-of-the-year compilation, *The Year's Best Science Fiction: Fourth Annual Collection* (St. Martin's Press, 602 pp., \$11.95 ISBN 0-312-00710-8). There's usually also a hardback available for around a double sawbuck—well-worth the investment for the permanent binding.

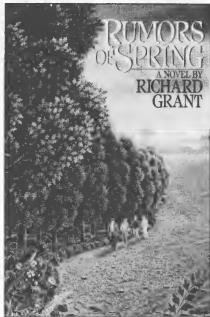
I don't know how large the word-age is in this book. I'm guessing somewhere between a quarter of a million and three hundred thousand words. That's a lot of imagination put to paper. There are twenty-seven stories by most of the hot writers in contemporary sf, along with story introductions, a comprehensive overview of the year's sf by the editor, and a four-page listing of additional recommended reading.

Part of the gauge of this volume's excellence is evidence that occasionally Dozois went far afield to pick superlative work—or he picked work by less than star-level writers. For example, he selected two short pieces that deserved to be on anybody's award's ballot this year, but have been virtually ignored. One is "Grave Angels," a deeply affecting fantasy by Richard Kearns. The other is Neil Barrett Jr.'s "Sallie C.," a whacked-out dark comedy of an alternative West that stakes out unique territory somewhere in the terra incognita between Waldrop and Doctorow.

So who are your favorite sf writers? Gibson, Willis, Bear, Robinson, Sucharitkul, Lee, Card, Silverberg, Knight, Powers, Turtledove, Sterling, Shiner, Fowler? They're all there, and more.

Dozois's overview is generally complete and just detailed enough. But as in other years, his coverage of film, an increasingly important aspect of the science fiction field, is spotty. He, for example, lauds *Brazil* (and rightly so); then praises the film for catching the

basic spirit of a Philip K. Dick novel. But then he proceeds to ignore Alan Rudolph's *Trouble in Mind* which was even more effectively PKDickian. There are many other serious omissions as well. It's not that I expect the ever-busy writer and editor Dozois to become a full-time film critic—but it would be terrific if one of the genuine-



ly film-literate folks in the field such as Leanne Harper, Bill Warren, or Gahan Wilson could give him a viewing list to take to his local video rental store each year.

Here's an important anthology that few will ever see—partly because it's published by a company that doesn't do a lot of bookstore distribution with its genre programs, partly because it claims to be a Western rather than sf. I'm speaking of *The Best of the West* edited by Joe R. Lansdale (Doubleday, 178 pp., \$12.95, ISBN 0-385-23256-X). Technically, not all the contents are fiction of the fantastic, but the book does include sf, fantasy, off-trail, imaginative, affecting, and some just plain weird stories.

There is Neil Barrett, Jr.'s "Sallie C.," which I mentioned in the review previous. It tries to answer the question of what two would-be flybys from Ohio, the boy Erwin Rommel and his mother, and some other odd, assorted companions are all doing in 1903 at Pat Garrett's saloon. Chad Oliver is on hand with an all-too-infrequent contribution, this time about two fly fishermen from Austin who have an odd but human run-in with a group of hunters from elsewhere. John Keefauver's "Cutliffe Starkvogel and the Beats who Liked TV" is

a modern tall-tale. Ardath Mayhar's in the book; so are Brian Garfield and Loren Estleman and Elmer Kelton. William F. Nolan has a teleplay for a variant *Zorro*. Lolo Westrich's "Stoned to Yellow" is close to indescribable. These are all Westerns, whether historical, alternate, or contemporary. All of a sudden, editor Lansdale has breathed life into a field some of us had suspected was getting moribund. Thanks to *The Best of the West*, it looks like maybe yet another genre has its own *Dangerous Visions*.

Evolution goes on—and not necessarily for the better. The proliferating shared-world anthologies are one thing, constituting a whole sub-genre of their own, but now there's a sub-sub-genre rooting out of that particular mulchpile. The works of both Marion Zimmer Bradley and C. J. Cherryh have spawned spin-off volumes of stories set in the primary writers' universes, but written by friends and admirers. This is not necessarily a bad thing. But it is a derivative thing, and the returns still aren't in on the overall impact and quality of such books.

But here's a new one of that ilk that so caught me by surprise, I had to pick it up and browse. It's *Friends of the Horseclans* edited by Robert Adams and Pamela Crippen Adams (Signet, 284 pp., \$3.50, ISBN 0-451-14789-8). These are an even dozen brand-new stories set in Bob Adams's Horseclan universe, the swords-and-heroin-barbarians post-Apocalyptic America series that has extended through seventeen novels over a decade. Seeing that Andre Norton and Steve Barnes had new stories might have been enough alone to tempt me. But when I saw the anthology included a new George Alec Effinger "Maureen Birnbaum" story, I knew I had to pick this book up. I mean, what would the ultimate preppy have to say about the art of war? Plenty, as it turns out. The book gets points for amusement value, and the editors get a high score for having the imagination and wit to invite such a wide range of contributors to Adams's highly specific world.

Along something of the same line, Janet Morris has collected her "Tempus" stories from the *Thieves World* anthologies and adapted them as *Tempus* (Baen, 277 pp., \$3.50, ISBN 0-671-65631-7). For those who liked the character in *Thieves World*, this makes a simple way to have all the stories gathered together. As a bonus, there are eight new pieces. The downside is that the stories, taken all at once, come across as a bit repetitive. But for

hard-core Tempus fans, this shouldn't be a problem.

Timothy Zahn used to be an ornament to Bluejay's line. Now he is a star in the Baen Books firmament. Along with his novels, Baen has published Zahn's collection *Cascade Point* (404 pp., \$3.95, ISBN 0-671-65633-3). These are thirteen thoughtful progress, pro-technology stories, including the eponymous Hugo-winning short novel. It's good to see someone this talented and readable ably representing the more conservative side of the sf spectrum.

First there was *Destinies*, then *Far Frontiers*; now Jim Baen is back to editing *New Destinies* (Baen, 288 pp., \$2.95, ISBN 0-671-65628-7). Baen has published such first-rate original anthologies edited by Elizabeth Mitchell as the three-in-one novella collections, *After the Flames* and *Under the Wheel*. The tone of this first volume of *New Destinies* is set by Robert Forward, Paul Anderson, G. Harry Stine, and Fred Saberhagen. Keith Laumer has a new Retief story. John and Mary Gribbin contribute an essay defending sociobiology. Obviously not everyone's cup of tea. But if you liked *Destinies* and its cousins before you'll also like this new incarnation.

DAW has published two new reprint anthologies. One is *Isaac Asimov Presents the Great SF Stories: 16*, edited by Isaac Asimov and Martin H. Greenburg (350 pp., \$3.50, ISBN 0-88677-200-1). This could equally be titled *The Greatest SF Hits of 1954*, a pot-pourri of seventeen stories by such new kids as Richard Matheson, Algis Budrys, and Philip K. Dick, along with the more established types such as Bester, Clarke, Oliver, Pangborn, and Knight. It's a good, solid collection, amplified in effect by Isaac Asimov's history lesson and story notes. *Vamps*, edited by Martin H. Greenburg and Charles G. Waugh (365 pp., \$3.50, ISBN 0-88677-190-0) is a theme anthology about female vampires. The sixteen stories range from Stephen King to Sheridan LeFanu. This collection is not the most representative or complete selection of distaff vampire stories. But it ought to get an award for the cutest title.

Need to keep track of all the novels, stories, and collections published in a given year? Want the hard statistics about the sf market? Locus Press has published the first in a series of virtually definitive reference works covering all this. The book is *Science Fiction in Print: 1935* by Charles N. Brown and William G. Contento

(Locus Press, PO Box 13305, Oakland, CA 94661, 254 pp., \$29.95, ISBN 0-9616629-2-1). The subtitle says it all: "A comprehensive bibliography of books and short fiction published in the English language." The plot isn't much. The characters aren't fleshed out. The style is unadorned. But the detail-work is fascinating. This is an absolutely necessary book for browsing or research. The 1986 volume should be due shortly.

Short Takes

Okay, so I was wrong. Sue me. I guessed that Robert Wilson's *A Hidden Place* would win the Philip K. Dick Award for best American sf fantasy original paperback. I made that prediction, even while saying I hoped that Bradley Denton's wonderful *Wrack & Roll* would cop the award. Well, neither did. The winner was James Blaylock's *Homunculus*. Now you know why I don't bet on the horses or Presidential elections.

The original cyberpunk novel is back in print again, this time in more permanent form in a handsome hard-

back. I'm speaking, of course, of Alfred Bester's *The Stars My Destination* (Franklin Watts, 197 pp., \$15.95, ISBN 0-531-15050-X). All slick, glittery surfaces, nonstop paranoid action, and dark romance, Bester's replay of *The Count of Monte Cristo* is as compulsively readable as ever. Would you be surprised at how many of us may secretly admit that this is our favorite sf novel of all time?

Joe Lansdale's *Dead in the West* (Space and Time, 138 W. 70th St. 4-B, New York, NY 10023-4432, 119 pp., \$6.95, ISBN 0-917053-04-4) is a small-press short novel with a great deal of grotesque charm. Imagine George Romero directing a Clint Eastwood movie about the mysterious preacher coming to a crummy little East Texas town. He's trying to escape his past; naturally he runs into as foul a bunch of walking dead as Tom Savini could ever make up. This, as the writer wills it, is a B-movie, tongue-in-cheek exercise in gross-out graphic horror. Naturally I enjoyed it.

For those who enjoyed the work
(continued on page 94)

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SCREEN

by Gahan Wilson

On women, men, and monsters—and how to tell them apart.

Gothic (Vestron Pictures)
Making Mr. Right (Orion Pictures)
My Demon Lover (New Line Cinema)

Ken Russell's movies always lurch to extremes—both extremes. You can rely on them always to contain some genuinely shocking and sophisticated stuff (though you sometimes do get the feeling that that stuff has been shoved into the area of daring-do and worldliness only with great effort and the use of both hands and a lot of sweat and grunting), but there is, also reliably, a strong undercurrent of head-shaking morality and old-timey awe at all the naughty goings on.

It's as if you were getting the story simultaneously from your wicked Uncle Earl, who moved to Paris and became very naughty, and your Aunt Min, who never left the farm and would not dream of even heading in the direction of New York because she knows muggers and all those other awful people would rape her and so on before she got halfway there. It's like those horrendous weekly papers I browse through furtively in supermarket checkout lines, those papers which keep me up to date on which television actress has been violated lately by Martians (and exactly what those filthy extraterrestrials did to her with their filthy little green *you know what's!!!*) and at the same time raise their editorial eyes to Heaven in horror at what they have gone to so much trouble to tell me.

Tabloid Gothic

Gothic is very much a *National Enquirer* sort of peek at what you might



GOthic ROMANCES: Polidori, Byron, and Shelley on their haunted summer.

have seen had you been a fly on the wall of the Villa Diodati on the shores of Lake Geneva (not Aunt Min's Lake Geneva in Wisconsin) when Lord Byron and his friend Polidori visited Percy Bishe Shelley and his friend Mary Godwin (Russell reverses who visited who, but it makes dramatic sense), and they all got involved in an historic, storm-inspired contest to see which of them could write the most horrific Gothic Novel, and how Mary, later Mary Shelley, won hands down and forever by eventually creating nothing less than *Frankenstein*, though Polidori did manage to win a sort of limping immortality by filching the story which Byron actually made up at the Villa then writing it as *The Vampyre* (and basing the title figure's appearance and mannerisms very much on Byron), which is generally credited as being a

large part of the stimulation for Bram Stoker's *Dracula*.

So I'm sure you'll agree, dear friends, that this was rather an important social event for folks such as ourselves, the sort who read and/or write for magazines like *The Twilight Zone*, and one of the things I was looking forward to in particular was at least a brief glimpse of these talented types regaling one another with their blossoming tales of horror, certainly a shot or two of Mary—maybe by a flickering fireplace, maybe by lightning flashes—shown giving Frankenstein's monster his first tiny, faltering steps, or heaping his first prattling curses on the good doctor: F—but Russell is determined not to do anything so banal or obvious, so we are cheated of all of that.

True, there is some very nice stuff indeed where we see the shuddering

authors reading to one another the German Gothic tales which inspired their gruesome contest, and there is an excellent worm-infested suit of armor involved in the sequence which I'm sure any of the old Gothic authors would have approved of highly, but, damn it, it does seem mighty chintzy not to have, given us even one tiny glimpse of that literary event which gives the whole movie its point and purpose.

I suppose I would not resent the omission so much if "Gothic" had otherwise striven for subtlety or attempted to avoid the obvious image. Russell, as is absolutely right and proper, lets her rip from the start, full speed ahead, and, true to the Gothic tales and novels which inspired the doings which inspired this movie, he piles the ghastly images atop one another in an ever higher-towering heap, and gives us a continuous, confused fun-house battering of horrific images and events, never for a moment holding back of such altogether appropriate delicacies such as stiff, decaying, half-dissected cadavers sliding slickly and wittily down marble stairs; terrified horses galumphing through the night bearing near-shapeless riders in wild, raggedy capes; women smeared with dungeon filth unhappily chewing dead rats in basements, and spaghetti in elaborate silver chafing dishes tossed with bloody leeches. The overly used italics and excessively employed florid adjectives so dear to the throbbing hearts of the Gothic masters are superbly implied by the chaotic abundance, the unending deluge, of these and other ghastly images.

The part of the film that does not work, or did not for me, is the one implied above by my regret at not getting to see Mary begin to create her monster: I got no feeling of being in the presence of these legendary people. I did not for a minute believe I was looking at George Gordon, Lord Byron, for instance. The actor who plays him, Gabriel Byrne, is twisty, all right, and I'm sure Lord Byron was quite twisty, but he entirely lacks the larger-than-life, high romantic looks and style (it even had a name: "Byronic") which the poet was famous for, and, like the other actors, delivers his lines, even his most florid ones, in a decidedly squeezed-up, contemporary way, and you would certainly think that Russell, since he has gone to such lengths to try and catch the unabashed gaudiness of the sort of wild and woolly imagery the Gothics contrived to present,



BREAKING MR. RIGHT, Ann Magnuson gets a head.

would have his actors use something which would at least hint at the rather more florid diction and delivery that would go with the period and the type. There is a pass at it by Timothy Spall, who plays Polidori, in his opening appearance, a hint of dandified gestures and grand poses, but he is presented as being an odd sort, a freak among the rest (a good example of the hidden Aunt Min in the movie), and anyhow his high-faluting airs gradually fade away.

Of course this is typical of the *Enquirer* approach, the revelation that the world famous artist or actor or whatever is really "only" another boring drunk or tiresome old fool obsessed by young things eager and willing to take advantage, but is this what you want to learn about Byron or Shelly? Particularly if it's only half-baked mythologizing at the best? Not I.

And, I am afraid, the most unfortunate bit of Aunt Minism in the film is a shock shot of Mary Shelley's dead child floating just under the water unseen by the tourists in an excursion steamer having the birthplace of *Frankenstein* being pointed out to them while our personal off-camera narrator smugly and very snidely whispers to us that we, which is to say you and I, know why Ms. Shelley wrote her book: why to compensate for having lost her child, of course! What other motive could a woman possibly have to write such a book, eh, fellows? Excuse us, ladies, while we chaps nudge one another smugly as we write books (and make movies) for far more grown-up, serious reasons. Girls only do that sort of thing when they can't do what God meant them to.

Piffle, Mr. Russell, sir; sheer piffle.

New Roles Don't Make Mr. Right
Since we're on the subject of sexual

chauvinism, it's only appropriate we turn to *Making Mr. Right*, the latest comedy by director Susan Seidelman, which is a kind of mirror image version of those mediocre comedies they used to crank out a while back wherein Jack Carson, say, would shake his head and scratch his scalp in puzzlement because there was simply no understanding the way Penny Singleton's mind worked since she was a dame, and who the hell understood dames? This was understood to be hilariously funny by the while-back audiences and they would laugh dutifully at it all and shake their heads as this or that female gave yet another demonstration of how stupid or sneaky or just plain bitchy women always were even when they had a crack at a guy as nice as Dennis Morgan, for Christ's sweet sake.

In Ms. Seidelman's bleak world all men are either creeps or bastards—all men, no exceptions, no excuses (I'd like to see you try and get away with any excuses with Ms. Seidelman, you brute!)—and all women are demeaned automatically by any association with them. The plot of the film is an inverse of one of male chauvinism's oldest and most dearly-beloved fantasies, namely the Pygmalion dream, wherein one lucky male solves the problem of there being no tolerable living woman in the entire world by creating an ideal artificial one with his own two hands to his own specifications and bringing her to life so she can be his slave for life and no stupid remarks and no goddamn back talk, awright? Awright.

The Pygmalion creation here is a male android (played by John Malkovich as a cute dumb blond exactly as Debbie Reynolds used to play cute dumb blondes since Mr. Malkovich is no dope and knows which side his bread is buttered on) created by a nerd scientist also played by John Malkovich as a big brain who knows about Einstein's theories and all that kind of stuff but really is a jerk because he doesn't understand women. Again, Mr. Malkovich plays *him* that way because he is no dope and knows which side his bread is buttered on.

Of course the scientist is not *really* the Pygmalion since he's only a man; the Pygmalion is a female publicist played by Ann Magnuson as something along the lines of the above-mentioned Dennis Morgan because she knows which side her bread is buttered on, only she has a difficult time with the role because as it is written it keeps switching around and I guess her quest for consistent motivation

must have been exhausting since the character starts out as a Roz Russell type high-powered-head-of-the-world's-most-successful-pr-firm-which-can-make-or-break-politicians-by-giving-or-withholding-her-services, then slowly transforms into a kind of Lucille Ball panic-button-type terrified of losing her job.

Whatever, once the android gets a look at her it grabs her breasts and from then on can Only Think of One Thing and does so consistently with every female who crosses its path. There are, of course, some nice comic possibilities with this and there is one sequence wherein they are very nicely exploited by Mr. Malkovitch and by Laurie Metcalf (who walks away with the entire motion picture so far as I'm concerned) as an employee of the scientist who is smitten by him and who, mistaking the android for him, bullies it into an impromptu date at a shopping mall with really very funny results. Her slow descent from giddy joy at her success to growing dismay

sort of general trend in the real world but just a minor, abortive little side-growth of the sexual adjustment presently going on in our society, because if, God forbid, it truly is a significant straw in the wind then our two poor sexes are not in the process of coming together at all, but have missed connections and merely passed by one another by and each one of us is only heading for the benighted position recently vacated by the other. Please let it not be so.

Nasty Charm, Tacky Depravity

One sign no such complete interchange has taken place is the recent release of a film called *My Demon Lover*, a modest little attempt at romantic farce which is really well-intentioned, even though it is based on the thoroughly heartless notion—one remarkably devoid of any sensitivity to the female sex (the more particularly so since its author is a woman)—that its droll comedic idea is that a series of rape

across as one of those frightening monsters you either quietly cross the street to avoid or call 911 to report, depending on how responsible a citizen you are. I think the real problem with the folks who put together *My Demon Lover* is something I have problems with now and then myself: they've been living in New York a little too long and become, perhaps, just a touch over-acclimated to appalling horrors in the course of their day to day lives. Routinely stepping over dying misfits on the sidewalk and schooling ourselves to ignore the pleading of starving old ladies lurking in the entrances and exits of our public transport system does tend, friends, to dull a little our gentler sensibilities here in the Five Boroughs.

Whatever, (as we say in the Big Apple) (and I understand you folks say the same thing out there in LA) this monster is taken under the tender, rather thinnish wing of Michelle Little, who portrays an extreme female victim type, the sort of waif who can instantly locate and fall hopelessly in love with the meanest misogynist in any random sampling of males, and thence forth, the script involves the two of them in a combination of *Beauty and the Beast* and *The Princess and the Frog*, all told very much on the fairy tale level, albeit under a heavy overlay of Manhattan grime.

Essentially the film's a romp for a small army of make-up and special effects artisans led by Carl Fullerton inspired by the notions of Bernie Wrightson and they all work away like Santa's elves and have a proper field day creating variations on devils and ogres and setting themselves a series of challenges ranging from minor fang jobs to toothed potbellies to exploding old women to major monsters crawl the turrets of Central Park's Belvedere Castle. (It's the first time I've ever seen any film company make use of that dear old monument.)

Not by any means an outstanding success, more a training ground for fx technicians eagerly learning their trade than anything else, *My Demon Lover* is nonetheless striving and it has a nice, yeasty bubble to it, something like a walk on the upper West Side on a hot summer evening with a rich smell of bus fumes and odd, often rotting foods in the air and a wild mix of safe and dangerous wanderers on the sidewalk, and by God, the damn's thing's made me try to go poetic, so it can't be all bad. What the hell, why not go see it if you're in the mood for a little tacky depravity? ■



PERSONAL DEMONS: Michelle Little witnesses Scott Valentine's metamorphosis.

to resigned despair is presented beautifully and I hope to see her get many more chances to exploit what is obviously a first rate talent. If the rest of the film were as kindly disposed to the human race and as forgoing of the faults of both its sexes as this chunk, Ms. Seidelman would have had something going for her; nothing monumental, mind, but a pleasant little comedy which I'd have liked very much to see.

As it is I found *Making Mr. Right* a pretty depressing experience and I profoundly and most deeply hope (and believe—I tend to be optimistic about these things in spite of my outward appearances) it's not reflective of some

murders (sometimes a rape followed only by a mere ripping apart with claws) by a prowling entity known as The Mangler might be unknowingly committed by a supposedly loveable street person (who is constantly insulting or making nasty grabs at women unfortunate enough to be noticed by him in the subway or on the sidewalk). Whimsical certainly, but you must admit it does have nasty overtones.

This creature is played by Scott Valentine in what I am sure he takes to be an extremely broad version of the early Jack Lemmon style, but nobody very alert was watching him and so his character ends up coming

ILLUMINATIONS



PROPHET OF THE "DAMNED"

Perhaps the fat man with the large mustache was not a man at all. Sure he looked human. Pudgy in the right places, bespectacled, properly attired in early-twentieth-century garb, and all. But what if he were really an alien? Sent down to earth in 1874. Landing with a thump in some grassy place . . . and proceeding with the experiment. His mission? To find out how far our feeble imaginations could stretch. To nudge our minds open—paving the way for the rest of the aliens to land without causing undue panic. Perhaps it was all part of some intergalactic plan . . .

Or then again, maybe not.

Maybe the fat man was just Charles Fort, human being. If you've never heard of him, you're missing out on an important chapter in the history of . . . well, the history of weirdness.

After receiving a sizable inheritance, Charles Fort left his career as a reporter and devoted all his time to . . . collecting. He'd plunk himself down in a chair at The New York Public Library and take notes. He was gathering what he called "damned data" for the books to come. There in the library day after day, he compiled a vast body of information on the stuff scientists ignore, the happenings that society always turns away from. He challenged science while still respecting it. Fort held with Hamlet: "There are more things in heaven and earth. . ."

For example, he assembled a collection of reports about objects falling from the sky: hailstones the size of elephants, a thousand tons of butter, black snow, rain of blood, fish, frogs, strange beeflike substances, cannon balls . . .

But the rotund, walrus-mustached man did more than just list outrageous phenomena. He found explanations. Each weird happening became a springboard for his whimsical solutions. For the preposterous precipitation mentioned above, he offered dozens of explanations: could it be food supplies from supervessels wrecked in aerial battles? Debris from interplanetary disasters? Was the "blood" that fell just rain colored by sands from other worlds? Or was it the result of the internal hemorrhaging of the solar system itself. . .?

Fort was also the first to come up with the idea that

humans might just be "cattle"—put here to be eaten by some other beings. And long before anyone used the expressions "UFO" or "ET," Fort was listing sightings of strange flying objects and speculating about aliens.

Before there was an Eric Von Daniken, or a Charles Berlitz, or a Ray Palmer, there was a Charles Fort. The main difference between Fort and many of those who followed was in his approach. He never came across as a "True Believer." In fact, his tongue slipped in and out of his cheek so rapidly one was never quite sure *when* he was serious. If ever.

Fort's books, *The Book of the Damned* (1919), *New Lands* (1923), *Lo!* (1931), and *Wild Talents* (1932), are available in one volume: *The Books of Charles Fort*, from Dover Publications, Inc., 31 East 2nd St., Mineola, NY 11501, for \$17.50 (\$18.35 postpaid). The Fortean tradition also lives on in such publications as *Fortean Times*, *Pursuit*, and *INFO Journal*. In fact, the Fortean Society itself has been thriving since the day Charles Fort was tricked into attending its opening celebration. For more on this subject, you might enjoy Damon ("To Serve Man") Knight's introduction to *The Books of Charles Fort*, or his biography, *Charles Fort, Prophet of the Unexplained*.

Charles Fort's writing is peppered throughout with a philosophy—almost Taoist in nature—that challenges our concept of reality and existence. He confronted the reader with the disturbing idea that a search for consistency and order is a search that leads away from Truth.

Some would find this logic strange. Alien, even.

Perhaps Charles Fort was *indeed* an alien. Maybe he was sent to prepare us for the wonders to come—visitors from the stars. It's not too late. Fort is gone, but his books are still here. Are we willing to stretch our minds? Can we face the "damned data" dead-on, unflinching, and say "I wonder . . ."

If so, perhaps they will come. And soon there will be new friends among 'us. Teaching us wonderful things. They will elevate us—enlighten us.

Or maybe they'll just eat us.

—Peter R. Emshwiller

ILLUMINATIONS

I SING THE BODY ECLECTIC

It's a dog-eat-dog otherworld out there these days. The competition's rough; it's not easy to get noticed. Time was, a disincarnate spirit guide simply possessed the first available trance channeler, picked a tunny accent, and commenced dispensing eternal wisdom to us poor slobs down here on the earth-plane. That was before celestial entities became celebs. Now Astral Presences are lined up for guest shots on talk shows, soap operas, TV movies, and "Doonesbury"; suddenly stores are jammed with channeled cassettes, videotapes, and—ahem!—ghost-written books. It's no longer enough to be a mere alien messiah from the outermost dimensions. These days, ya gotta have a *shtick*.

Accordingly, Emmanuel, an unseen "being of golden light," is touted on the seance circuit as the Entity who speaketh in verse. Move over Rod McKuen: *Emmanuel's Book* (Bantam New Age), a collection of poetic profundities modestly subtitled "a manual for living comfortably in the cosmos," is the season's trendiest metaphysical tome.

Ironically, the hype is misdirected—the book is not the mystic doggerel of some undead Kahlil Gibran. Rather, beyond the goeey gushy cover blurb, pseudo-free verse layout, and the obligatory chipper amateur cartoons (the margins are infested with little flowers), *Emmanuel's Book* is one of the most down-to-earth (as it were) introductions to New Age cosmology on the market. Largely free of cloying jargon and silly coinages (with a few lapses), Emmanuel's explanation of Life, the Universe, and Everything is lucid and concise, leaning in to the metaphor of reincarnate lives considered as a form of cosmic high school. Advice for dealing with prob-

lems, traumas, relationships, illness, and death is pithy (if bland), and fairly common sense oriented (if relentlessly upbeat). On world affairs, Emmanuel is downright refreshing: the entity scoffs at apocalypse (the idea that we can destroy the earth "is a sense of grandiosity that borders on the infantile"); discounts omens and portents ("Do not read disaster into natural phenomena"); recommends being suspicious of gurus, teachers, preachers, and politicians; and is, amaz-

guru) freely acknowledges that the spirit may be a psychological projection—and if it is, so what? After all, Emmanuel's advice on Emmanuel's advice is: if you like it, use it; if you don't like it, ignore it.

Right-o, spirit. But—just leave the verses to Hallmark...

—Mark Arnold

ETERNAL EVIL

It began quietly. The Canadian journalist who first experienced it called it

lions with her performances in such films as *Capricorn One*, *Family Plot*, and the cult-classic *Trilogy of Terror*, and co-stars Winston Rekert, who won this year's Canadian Academy Award for Best Actor. Second, it's a horror movie with a fresh twist. It's menace isn't a flesh-and-blood monster, but a reincarnated psychic vampire who stalks its victims by astral projection.

But there's one more thing that makes *Eternal Evil* special, particularly to readers of this magazine—the man behind the cameras. New Century's Executive in Charge of Production is none other than Buck Houghton, producer of the first three years of the original *Twilight Zone* television program. Produced by Pieter Kroonenburg and directed by George Mihalka, *Eternal Evil* is the second in a series of films which Houghton, now sixty-eight, has helped New Century develop.

"It's tough for the independents to compete with the big studios these days," says Houghton, "but the rewards, if you succeed, are terrific—not only financially but creatively. All you can do is do your best, and leave the rest for the public to decide."

So far, the reaction to *Eternal Evil* has been enthusiastic. The *Toronto Star* called it "a virtuoso piece of filmmaking without the graphic excesses of today's slice-and-dice exploitation flicks." And, at the International Fantastic Film Festival in France this spring, at which *The Fly* won the Critics' Choice Award and *Blue Velvet* won the Jury Prize, *Eternal Evil* was voted Best Film by the toughest critics of all—the filmgoers themselves.

Watch out. It may get you next.

—TK



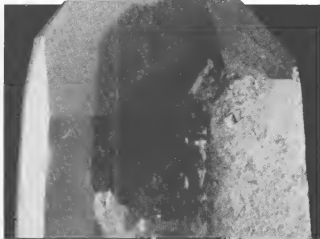
ingly, pro-nuke ("Respect nuclear energy. Use it with wisdom.... The issue is carelessness, greed, inconsideration, not nuclear power").

There's even an option for those of us who wouldn't mind picking up a little wisdom, but aren't about to climb aboard the astral bandwagon. Unlike most entities, it seems Emmanuel doesn't possess his channeler, Pat Rodegast: he's only a voice that we can't hear; she can; she translates. So, in the book's introduction, Ram Dass (the Harvard psych. professor and LSD experimenter turned sixties

"both brutal and gratifying." It drove hundreds into a frenzy in France, and touched thousands more in Atlanta and Chicago earlier this summer, with no sign of stopping."

No, it's not a weird new cult or a strange plague. It's *Eternal Evil*—a new independently produced film of supernatural terror released this summer by New Century Entertainment. But there are several things which set this film apart from the usual run-of-the-drive-in horror movie. First, it stars Karen Black, who's chilled mil-

ILLUMINATIONS



CRYSTAL UPDATE

Well, it's finally happened. There's finally proof that crystals can bestow wealth and happiness through their subtle vibrations—vibrations so powerful that they're even reported to affect unbelievers.

Sort of.

Rock Currier (yes, it's his real name), owner of a gem-dealing concern in Monrovia, California, called Jewel Tunnel Imports, tells us that quartz crystal prices have at least doubled in the three or four years since the New Age of Crystal Consciousness dawned in America. In one recent day alone Currier sold sixty thousand dollars worth of the common stone.

That should settle the matter of crystal power once and for all. There's power in them stones.

Money power.

Skeptics should note that Currier didn't even bother to "clear" the stones—a process which entails washing the stones in sea water and leaving them to bleach in the moonlight. Nor did he program them with "proper intent."

The gem dealer said that his customers have found a number of unique applications for the rocks: some plant a single crystal in their swimming pools to prevent the growth of algae. Others keep them in their refrigerators to to reduce the

machines' use of electricity. And some folks even tape the crystals to the gasoline lines of their cars, swearing that it improves gas mileage. (Currier says there's special protocol involved here: you have to point the crystal either toward or away from the carburetor. But he can't recall which.)

Currier himself is immune to the power of the crystals—though he isn't immune to the effect they've had on his sales. "I personally have never experienced any sort of energy or feeling from them at all," he confessed to us. Customers have repeatedly tried to demonstrate the stones' healing powers to him, with no effect. "I tell them I'm probably just burned out from being around them all the time," he said.

Even though he isn't a true believer himself, Currier treats the "healy-feelies" (a label for rock worshippers coined by disgruntled rock collectors who suddenly couldn't find any more affordable run-of-the-mill stones) with respect. "It's been good for my business, and I can't complain," he declared.

Currier figures that the crystal craze will hold strong for another couple of years before it goes the way of the pet rock. Meanwhile, don't call him to place an order—he only sells wholesale.

—Deborah Quilter

TV OR NOT TV?

Somewhere out there, people are watching Harry Belafonte in the role of a gargoyle that he never played.

People are watching the ghost of Jack Webb, who died in 1982, on a rerun of *The Twilight Zone* from 1939.

People are wondering if the Alfred Hitchcock on TV was an imposter, and what it means that Clint Eastwood scratches his head sort of like Stan Laurel did.

They wonder, and they ask about these things in the questions submitted to Richard K. Shull's syndicated column, "The Answer Man," and to other newspaper columns that answer questions about television.

These are columns that generally turn up somewhere toward the back of the TV schedule magazine that comes with the Sunday newspaper.

Sure, some of the queries sound reasonable enough. For instance, just about anybody might wonder—as did the viewer who wrote in from Nashville—if Dorothy's dog, Toto, from *The Wizard of Oz*, is still alive.

(Maybe so. The movie dates to 1939, so the dog would be at least forty-eight years old, sir, probably as stiff as a rusted Tin

Woodman, but maybe so.)

But there are other sorts of questions too—questions you don't want to think about too much, lest they cause you question what sorts of glassy-eyed creatures of the night are tuned into the glow-box along with you:

—I would like to know when *The Twilight Zone* made its first episode and went on the air. I guess 1939."

—"What has happened to Jack Webb, star of *Dragnet*? Is he planning any more shows on TV?"

—"I've had several people tell me that Clint Eastwood is the son of Stanley Laurel of Laurel and Hardy. Could that possibly be true?"

—"My brother and I made a twenty dollar bet. He says Harry Belafonte played the head gargoyle in the movie of the same name."

—"After viewing a video of *My Little Pony* . . . and also seeing cartoons such as *The Smurfs* and *He-Man*, et cetera, with their seemingly evil overtones, could you tell me if the writers and producers practice Satanism?"

The answers?

Well . . . two of these we can answer for certain: *The Twilight Zone* went on the air in 1959—and the Devil take the Smurfs.

—Ron Wolfe



ILLUMINATIONS

THE CREATURE FROM THE SILT IN THE BLACK LAGOON

Common clay has long been the Ugly Stepsister of the mineral world. Next to flashy metals like gold and platinum, or dynamic hydrocarbons like petroleum and plastic, clay just didn't seem much to write home about. Chemically speaking, its name was mud.

But a sexy new area called *materials science* has changed all that.

Materials scientists are the people who've made headlines lately with stories about things like semiconductors, superconductors, and optical storage. They're the ones who brought you Silicon Valley.

And silicon is clay's closest cousin; it's nothing but sand with a good press agent.

So clay has a new lease on life, so to speak. Right now ceramics (which, of course, are made from clay) are the hottest thing in materials science; they never rust or corrode, they can be made lighter than paper and strong enough to cut steel. All this fuss has got scientists looking clay right in the molecules, as it were. And what they've seen is more than a little unsettling.

The ultrafine particles that clay is made of are arranged with baffling intricacy, stacked on top of each other in billions of microscopic layers—layers that give clay ten thousand times the surface area of a truly smooth object.

But that's just the beginning; clay has some very strange properties indeed. It "eats" radioactive and toxic chemicals by leaching them out of the soil and knitting them into its own substance. When you strike it with a blunt object, it radiates measurable amounts of energy for days, or even weeks.

But the weirdest thing



about clay is that it almost seems to be alive. It even reproduces itself.

How?

Down on the molecular level, clay has a distinctive pattern of lumps, gaps, and trace elements—all of which give the clay specific properties, a lot the way the genes in a living creature dictate its nature. When new layers of sediment silt onto the clay, they take on the distinctive pattern of the layers underneath them, much as RNA transfers the genetic code. If a layer of clay shears off from the mass, it can begin the "reproductive" process elsewhere.

The patterns and processes involved are intricate and complex enough, in fact, that some scientists suspected that clay may have provided the template that

created the complex organic molecules that later became the first living organisms.

Does all of this mean that clay is alive? Dr. Leila M. Coyne of California's San Jose State University finds the possibility intriguing. "If you think of what a life form is, then you have to be able to take the energy from the environment and use it to drive chemistry," she said recently in a *New York Times* interview. "Energy storage, collection, and transfer is probably the most fundamental requirement of a living system."

It's probably stretching a point to say that the clay pot on your windowsill is as alive as the petunia that's in it. But until the scientists make up their minds... be nice to your coffee cup, huh?

-TK

LATIN LAMA

In 1984, after living a long and full life, Lama Yeshe—one of the most important Tibetan Buddhist lamas, the one responsible for planting enclaves of Tibetan Buddhism all over the world—passed on. Now, apparently, he's been found reincarnated—in the Catholic kingdom of Spain.

Shortly after Lama Yeshe's death, a vision came to his associate, Lama Zopa Rinpoche: he saw an infant boy playing "in a certain way." A way that marked him as the Chosen One.

It was not until last year, however, that Lama Zopa found the young Latin lama, on a visit to a Buddhist center Lama Yeshe had founded in the foothills of the Pyrenees.

Lama Zopa came upon two-year-old Osel Ita Torres sitting on the ground, playing just as he had foreseen in his dream, and right away he knew he'd found his lama. The Tibetan Buddhists don't leave these things to chance, though, so the departed lama's prayer beads were set on the ground in front of the small boy, who immediately seized them up with delight and began to twirl them over his head.

So, recently, an ancient ritual was performed in Dharmasala, India, and two-year-old Osel was installed as the new high lama. The faithful have no doubt that he is Lama Yeshe returned to them.

Now the child and his parents have begun to think of emigrating to India, where the boy will receive spiritual training, and, at the proper time, assume leadership of the sect. His mother is, not surprisingly, delighted.

"Now," she says, "I will have not only a son, but a master as well."

-TK

BIOFUTURES:

THE NEXT TURN OF THE CORKSCREW

A GLIMPSE INTO THE BRAVE NEW WORLD OF GENETIC ENGINEERING AND BIO- TECHNOLOGY.

BY FREDERIK
POHL

When Watson and Crick unlocked the secret of the double-corkscrew shape of the DNA molecule a generation ago they opened the door to a new mastery of life itself. DNA is the blueprint for life. It is the DNA that determines whether we have brown eyes or blue, are tall of short—it is the DNA that determines whether the organism shall be an amoeba, a flowering plant or a human being like ourselves. Once the blueprint was known it became possible to discover what parts of it—which “genes”—produced which traits. And then—many man-years of research later—it began to be possible even to separate the strands of the DNA and pick out particular pieces, even to replace them with others.

We're a long way from being able to do that in any way we like, but already there have been vast advances. As I write this there is a field of strawberries growing in California which may not be frozen and killed by a frost, because some of their resident bacteria have been genetically altered so that they do not secrete the proteins damaging ice crystals form around; thus we can “edit” living organisms to make them better. (Or, at least, more the way we would like them to be.) More than that. Through manipulation of the DNA we can produce particular substances—for example, what are called monoclonal antibodies—which make research faster and surer, so that every day we learn new things about everything alive, ourselves included, and the things we learn from that basic research turn into new medicines, new techniques for plant and animal breeders, even new techniques for such surgical procedures as organ transplants.

And what all of this adds up to is

not merely strawberries that won't freeze and tomatoes that won't spoil in shipping, but a whole new hope for correcting some of the deficiencies in our own human bodies ... and, before long, no doubt, ways in which to make the next generation better than ourselves.

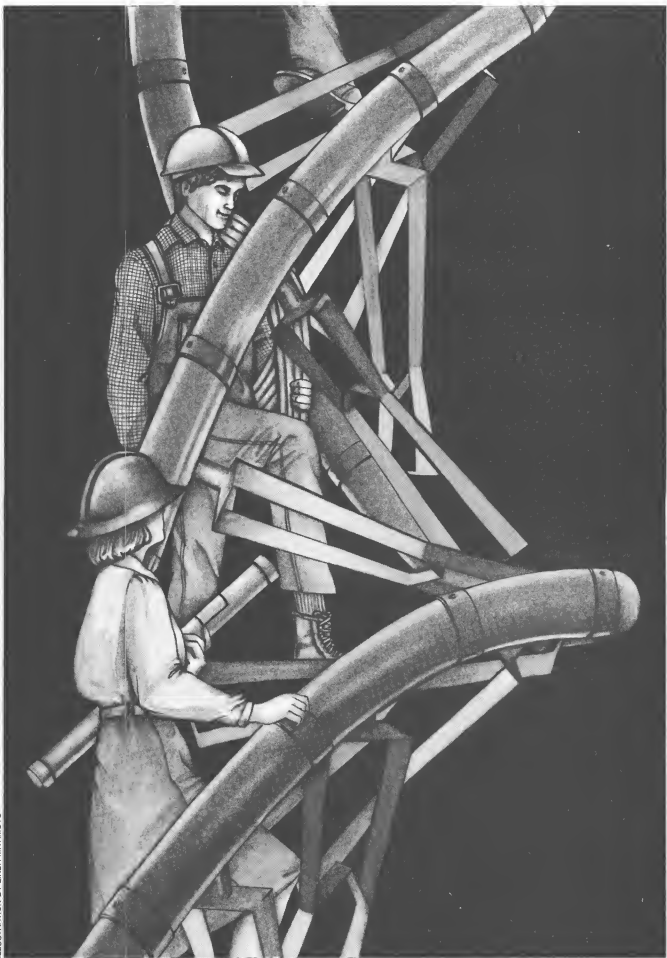
Perfecting the Body

The worst thing about the human body is that it runs out of programming long before we are ready to give it up. The ruthless evolutionary process called “survival of the fittest” stops working after the middle years. Hereditary traits that might produce hale, hearty, alert centenarians don't get selected over those that lead to arthritis, osteoporosis, Alzheimer's disease, and an early grave, because what “the fittest” really means is only the fittest to reproduce. Once the last child is conceived, the evolutionary selection process switches off ... and for most of the two-million-year history of the human race, that last child was born before its parents reached the age of thirty.

For this we pay very heavily. If we live to be senior citizens we pay in cancers, powdery bones, blurring eyes, clogged arteries and miseries of the prostate gland. There's a big dollar price, too. A huge fraction of our health expenses, private and state, go to paying for care for the aging bodies as they break down, and we pay that bill in cash all our lives in the form of doctor bills, taxes, and high rates for medical insurance.

We don't really have a choice about any of that. The only alternative would be to die at thirty, as evolution has prepared us to do, and few of us are willing to go that far.

So we cut and splice and dose



and irradiate. We do the best we can, and what we can do, through the wonders of biotechnology, gets better every year.

When we get sick, the cause usually comes from one of three sources. The things that make us sick are infectious diseases, like bacteria and viruses; assaults from the environment, like smoking, lead from automobile exhausts, and radiation from the odd power-plant explosion or nuclear test; and hereditary defects.

Biotechnology has already done wonders for the control of infectious diseases; most of the newest vaccines and antibiotics would hardly exist without sophisticated techniques of cloning and gene insertion.

What makes gene insertion possible is the fact that every living thing on Earth, from the simplest single-celled organism to us, seems to share a common evolutionary heritage. The apes are our brothers, the trees our cousins. Analogues of almost every chemical of the myriads that make our own bodies function can be found in other parts of the animal, or even the vegetable, kingdom. The juice of the opium poppy plugs into the same receptors in the human nervous system as the endorphins that our own bodies produce—with similar effects; that's why people use such drugs, either for anesthesia or to get high. Chemicals very like insulin are produced by such various living things as the gut bacterium *Escherichia coli*, the gloomy little protozoan, *Tetrahymena pyriformis* and—spinach.

So the present antibiotics and medicines are only a beginning. Using substances from our own bodies, and from other animals and even plants, gene insertion can produce the things we need to fight almost any imaginable infection, and has already begun to do so.

What biotechnology can do for us about the assaults from the environment is limited by our own bad habits. If we insist on breathing formaldehyde (from plastic furnishings and fittings), carbon monoxide (from cigarettes and, mostly, from car exhausts), and radioisotopes (from nuclear waste, the residue from bomb testing and the occasional Chernobyl), and on eating and drinking Hell's own buffet of heavy metals and carcinogens (from industrial, agricultural, and domestic pollution of our water, soil, and air), we will just go on getting sick as a result.

However, there's hope that once we get the cancers and other illnesses that our follies give us, biotechnology can help to control them. Cancer cells, for example, are chemically and physiologically different from the normal

BIOFUTURES:

cells in the body, and there is good reason to believe that, sooner or later, agents can be found that will capitalize on those differences to destroy the malignancies and leave the healthy cells alone. (But how much nicer it would be simply to cut off the pollution at the source! It wouldn't only cut down disease, it would make the world look, smell, and be a lot nicer!)

Science is just now beginning to make inroads against the genetic illnesses that people are born with and biotech is paving the way. There are two recent reports of successful experiments on human DNA, one to replace a missing gene the other to repair the damage caused by a defective gene that can't be replaced.

Perhaps the most tragic of birth defects is the brain damage, sometimes genetic, sometimes caused by an accidental injury, which keeps an otherwise healthy human being from ever developing the intelligence of an adult.

Most mentally handicapped people have quite good brains, suffering only a few small defects. To many researchers it seems logical that most of them could be made normal if only some sort of "smart serum" could be found that could be injected into their brains to repair those defects. Such a pharmaceutical may already exist in the form of *glial cells*. In the laboratory, rats which have been injected with glial cells do seem to get smarter. The procedure has not yet been tried on human beings, but if it works it might not only bring many persons now doomed to lifelong custodial care back into the mainstream of functioning human beings, but might even raise the IQ for the rest of us.

Spare Parts

Of course, all of these things must be tested first on experimental animals, and one of the great fears of many biotechnologists is that animal research is threatened by constant attack from any number of well meaning people.

Scientists are not sadists. Most experiments on animals are not particularly painful to the animals.

(Unavoidably there are a few kinds of experiments that are, but there are not many things that scientific experimenters do to animals that are much nastier than the way we get our eggs, veal, and pate de foie gras to eat.) The worst part about being an experimental subject, from the point of view of the animal, is that quite often it has to be "sacrificed" (that is to say, killed) so that its innards can be studied after the experiment.

But anyone who objects to that should logically object even more to the number of chickens, ducks, geese, turkeys, steers, pigs, and cuddly little baby lambs that are slaughtered every year, not for the sake of science but simply so that we can eat them. A slaughtered chicken may benefit one family by feeding it for one meal on one day out of their lives. A sacrificed laboratory animal may benefit the whole human race, forever.

In just that way, animal experiments have already given us, for example, the whole brand-new medical technology of organ transplants. What we can't repair in the human body we can sometimes replace, and that's what transplants and implants are for.

It's easy to pull out a broken carburetor or relay and replace it with a brand-new one off the shelf. It's a lot harder with living organs. The human body is xenophobic. Its cells try to mob and destroy any alien cells that enter it, as bees attack foreigners coming into their hive. There are ways of trying to deal with that—cyclosporine, for instance, numbs the reflex of immune response—but that leaves the body dangerously susceptible to any kind of infection. Moreover, spare parts aren't easily available; generally, the patient has to wait for someone with healthy organs to be shot or killed in an accident for his replacement.

The obvious answer to that is to make more spare parts—even machines rather than organic ones—and indeed we've seen a lot of that, though not very often with great success.

One problem there is the fact that all of our natural blood vessels are lined with slick, slithering cells collectively called the *endothelium*. Endothelial cells not only give the blood a nearly frictionless ride, they also resist clotting. The best manmade materials (such as synthetic fibers like dacron) don't.

This makes a problem for artificial organs of all kinds, from dialysis machines to the Jarvik-7 mechanical heart, because clots become embolisms and embolisms kill. Much research has gone into trying to find an artificial material as good as the endothelium,

(continued on page 90)

If a single civilization were to build self-replicating machines and send them out between the stars, those machines could visit every single planetary system in our galaxy within a few million or tens of millions of years, and perhaps much quicker than that. Their rate of reproduction would be geometric. Assuming they have some intelligent autonomy, these machines could perform many tasks besides simply traveling and replicating. They could carry the information and materials necessary to seed other planets with life, or to leave behind mechanical or biomechanical settlements. They could conduct research and return the information to their makers. They might pave the way for later conquest. Perhaps they would simply act as friendly envoys, making contact and enlisting allies.

If there are other intelligent civilizations, why haven't we heard from them? Enrico Fermi's question has yet to be answered. If such machines existed—like the self-replicating devices described by mathematician John von Neumann—why haven't they visited the Earth? Professor Frank Tipler thinks that the lack of evidence for such devices proves we are alone in this galaxy.

There could be other explanations. Perhaps all civilizations have refrained from deploying such machines. Perhaps it is simply too early in the galaxy's history. (Although there have been billions of years for life forms to develop and grow, surely not all have matured and become space-farers at the same time.) Perhaps self-replicating machines would mutate like living things across millions of years, and lose their original purpose. (We might still encounter them, of course.)

Consider a less idealistic, more naturalistic scheme.

A frightening scheme.

A space-faring civilization, foreseeing that it will have to compete with others like itself, seeks to even the odds by squelching young civilizations before they mature. The self-replicating von Neumann space probes it sends out could have several functions: to explore, study and return information to their makers; to destroy nascent civilizations; and to convert planetary bodies—asteroids and perhaps even larger objects—into raw material from which to make more probes. With each probe generating millions upon billions of successors, a single civilization could dominate the galaxy within a few hundred thousand years, given travel velocities just below light speed.

What stories those probes could tell! Traveling to the outer reaches of the galaxy, to the older stars of the globular clusters, to the rich, turbulent heart of the galactic core, discovering patterns of life (or lack of life), detailing the histories and morphologies of civilizations—and then

GALACTIC CHECKS AND BALANCES

destroying, sterilizing, whatever might compete with their makers.

It would only take one such civilizations, one group of intelligent beings both greedy enough, brilliant enough, and blind enough to perpetrate such a crime.

Perhaps there have been thousands of such deviants.

If so, why haven't we seen their machines?

On the scale of galaxies, as on the scale of the Earth's surface, there might be a kind of ecology at work. No single competitive system is allowed to dominate; eventually it meets its match, or its foil, and must retreat, or fight to hold its ground. Even civilizations which seek to mute or destroy competitors in their cradles might find other mature civilizations opposed to them.

Checks and balances. But within any balanced system or ecology, on the scale of the Earth or the galaxy, there is room for tragedy and destruction.

What characterizes an immature planetary civilization? Disparate cultures that have not yet united, or cast aside their youthful illusions. Cultures that do not understand their place in the cosmos, and that have not developed the political tools necessary to unite against a single, horrendous threat. Civilizations that continue to pour their radio messages into space, crying out in the galactic jungle, after all others have fallen silent knowing that hunters are abroad . . .

Frighteningly easy prey.

Such a story is told in *The Forge of God*.



*An introduction to
The Forge of God
by Greg Bear*



THE FORGE OF GOD

*We discover our greatest strengths
when we face our darkest fears.*

by Greg Bear

ILLUSTRATION BY DOMINICK FINELLE

A huge cinder cone has been discovered in Death Valley, California. Not listed on any maps, it is clearly artificial. An extraterrestrial emerges from the cinder cone and is discovered by a group of three geologists investigating the anomaly. It is taken to Shoshone, California, and from there to Vandenberg Air Force Base, where it is questioned by scientists and eventually by the President. Called "the Guest" by its hosts, it reveals that beneath the camouflage is a spaceship. But the Guest's people neither built nor piloted the ship. They are merely riding on it, as a kind of interstellar "flea." The ship is part of a fleet that destroyed its home world, and the Guest says that this fleet intends to destroy the Earth in a similar fashion. Before this secret is revealed, the Australian government discloses that a huge artificial granite formation has been found in the Great Victoria Desert, and that they have been communicating with robots from within the spaceship hidden there. The message from these robots directly contradicts the Death Valley extraterrestrial's words. Satellite photographs reveal an anomaly in Mongolia, being investigated by the Soviet Union.

The extraterrestrial's discussion with the President leaves the man in shock. He is not intellectually and emo-

tionally prepared for this. To make matters worse, the Guest dies soon after, and an autopsy only adds to the confusion. There's a distinct possibility, the scientists believe, that the Guest is in fact itself artificial—"manufactured" and not intended to live very long. Deceit piles upon misdirection; who can say what is actually happening?

After his re-election, but before his inauguration, the President makes a crucial televised speech before Congress describing his encounter:

NOVEMBER 10

"Mr. Speaker, honorable members of the House of Representatives, fellow citizens," the President began. "I have called this emergency conference after weeks of deep thought, and many hours of consultation with trusted advisors and experts. I have an extraordinary announcement to make, and a perhaps even more extraordinary request.

"You have no doubt been following with as much interest as I the events taking place in Australia. These events in the beginning seemed to bring hope to our stricken planet, the hope of god-

This excerpt is part of Greg Bear's new novel *The Forge of God*, coming from Tor Books in September 1987. Copyright © Greg Bear, 1987.

FORGE

like intervention from outside, of those who would act to save us from ourselves. We began to feel that perhaps our difficulties were indeed only those of a young species, faltering in its early footsteps. Now these hopes have been dashed, and we find ourselves in even deeper confusion.

"My sympathies lie with Prime Minister Stanley Miller of Australia. The loss of the three messengers from outer space, and the mystery surrounding their destruction—perhaps self-destruction—is a deep shock to us all. But it is time to confess that it has been less of a shock to me and to a number of my advisors. For we have been following a similar series of events within our own country, kept secret until now for reasons which will soon become clear.

"Late last September, three young geologists discovered a hill in the desert not far from Death Valley, in California. The hill was not on their maps. Near this hill they found an extraterrestrial being, an individual in ill health. They brought this individual to a nearby desert town and notified authorities. As I spoke with this being, this visitor from another world, the story it told me was chilling. I have never been so deeply and emotionally affected in my life. It spoke of a journey across ages, of the death of its home world, and of the agency of this destruction—the very vehicle which had brought it to Earth, now landed in Death Valley and disguised as a volcanic cinder cone.

"When I asked the Guest if it believed in God, it replied in a steady, certain voice, 'I believe in punishment.' The President paused, staring across the fully attended house. 'My dilemma, and the dilemma of all my advisors, military and civilian, and of all our scientists, was simple. Could we believe that our extraterrestrial visitor and the visitors in Australia were linked? They told such different stories...

"I wish that I brought news of some comforting solution to all who listen to me today. But I do not. I have never been a faithful church-goer. Still, within myself I have held my own faith, and thought it wise, as the leader of this nation, not to impose this faith on others who might disagree. Now, however, through these extraordinary events, I have had my faith altered, and I can no

longer keep silent. I believe we face incontrovertible evidence, proof if you will, that our days are numbered, and that our time on Earth—the time of the Earth itself—will soon be at an end. I that sought advice from those with more spiritual experience than I, and they have counseled me. I now believe that we are facing the Apocalypse predicted in the Revelation of John, and that on Earth, the forces of good and evil have made themselves known. Whether these forces be angels and demons, or extraterrestrials, seems to be of no importance whatsoever. I could say that I have spoken with an angel, but that does not seem literally

"The forces of good and evil have made themselves known," said the President. "Our history on Earth has been judged, and we have been found inadequate."

true—

"I can only conclude that in some fashion, our history on Earth has been judged, and we have been found inadequate. Whether the flaw lies in our bodies, or in our minds, it is clear that the history of human existence does not satisfy the Creator, and that He is working to wipe the slate clean, and begin again. To do this, he has sent mighty machines, mighty forces: which could begin, at any moment, to heat this Earth in God's forge, and beat it to pieces on a heavenly anvil."

The President paused again. Raised voices on the floor of Congress threatened to drown him out, and the Speaker had to rap his gavel many long minutes. The camera pulled back to show the President surrounded by a phalanx of Secret Service men, their faces grim, trying to look in all directions at once.

"Please," the President pleaded. "I must conclude."

The noise finally subsided. Sporadic shouts of anger and disbelief rose from the representatives.

"I can only say to my people, and the inhabitants of the Earth, that the time has come for us all to pray fervent-

ly for salvation, in whatever form it might come, whether we can expect it or not, or even whether we truly deserve salvation. The Forge of God cannot be appeased, but perhaps there is hope for each of us, in our private thoughts, to make peace with God, and find a way out from under the blows of His anger and disappointment."

Lt. Col. Albert Rogers, United States Army, is in charge of the Death Valley site, code-named "Furnace" after near-by Furnace Creek. The site has been cordoned and is off-limits to all but official visitors.

Lieutenant Colonel Rogers finished listening to the transcript of the broadcast and sat in the back of the trailer for several minutes, numb. He felt betrayed. What the President had said could not possibly be true. The men at the Furnace had not yet heard the speech, but there was no way he was going to keep it from them. How could he soften it for them?

"The bastard's surrendered," he murmured. "He's just left us here."

Rogers stood in the rear door of the trailer and looked at the cinder cone, dark and nondescript in the full morning light. "I can take a nuke right up inside that son of a bitch," he said quietly. "I can carry it in and stand over it until it goes off."

Not without the President's authority.

Actually, that wasn't entirely true.

But the President wouldn't actually stop them from making an attempt to defend themselves... would he? He hadn't said as much. He had simply stated that he thought it unlikely... what were his words? Rogers returned to the TV monitor and ran the tape back. "... The time has come for us all to pray fervently for salvation, in whatever form it might come, whether we can expect it or not..."

What did that mean?

And who would give Rogers his orders, the proper orders, now?

NOVEMBER 29

Compunews Network, Frederick Hart Reporting: "Here in the winter desert, only a few miles from Death Valley proper, it gets bitterly cold at night, and thousands of campfires light up the grass and sand around the government-declared National Security Site. In the middle of the site, rising against the clouds of stars like a giant black hump, is the so-called Bogey, the imitation extinct volcano (that has burrowed into the national imagination and into our

nightmares. People have come here from around the world, kept back a mile from the site by barbed wire and razor wire barricades. They seem to have come to worship, or to just sit quietly under the warm desert sun and stare. What does it mean to them, to us? Should they wish to storm the site? Will the Army be able to keep them back?

"Among their numbers are approximately ten thousand 'Forge-of-Godders,' with their various prophets and religious guides. The American Branch of this cult has arisen in just three weeks, sown in the fertile religious ground of the American South and West by the President's blunt, uncompromising words. I have spoken with these people, and they share the President's convictions. Most are fundamentalist Christians, seeing this as the apocalypse predicted in the Bible. But many come from other faiths, other religions, around the world. They say they will stay here until the end. As one cultist told me, 'This is the center. This is where it's at. Forget Australia. The End of the World begins right here, in Death Valley.'"

In response to the President's inability to deal with the situation, a clandestine movement within the military and the government tries for its own solutions. A nuclear weapon is procured, and delivered to the Furnace.

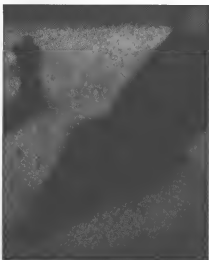
JANUARY 5

Rogers came out of a sound sleep at four a.m., just minutes before his wrist watch alarm was set to go off. He deactivated the alarm and switched on the small lamp at the head of his narrow bunk. For a luxurious minute, he lay still in the bunk, listening. All was quiet. All calm. It was Sunday; most of the Forge-of-Godders had moved to Furnace Creek the night before for a huge rally planned this morning by the Reverend Edwina Ashberry.

He dressed quickly, putting on climbing boots and pulling two hundred-foot lengths of nylon rope from a knapsack in the trailer's corner. Rope in hand, he looked down at the small desk and telephone, brows knitted. Then he dropped the ropes on the bunk and sat in the chair to write a letter to his wife and son, in case he did not make it back. That took five minutes. He was still ahead of schedule, so he spent five more minutes carefully shaving, making sure every long bristle on his neck was scraped off: military clean. He brushed his teeth and combed his hair meticulously, glancing at the letter. Unhappy with the wording, he quickly recopied

the message on to a fresh piece of paper, signed it, folded it into an envelope and posted the envelope on his message board with address and instructions.

At four thirty, he descended the trailer steps and stood in the bitterly cold desert darkness, a steady wind dragging at his coat and pants legs. At the east end of the camp was Senator Julio Gilmonn's car, in a fenced-off square reserved for the munitions locker. Gilmonn himself stood with two aides, a handsome, stern-looking middle-aged black woman and a young white male, bulky and clean-cut, near the inner gate leading to the



rock.

"Good morning," Rogers said as he approached. Gilmonn extinguished a cigarette after taking one last frowning, concentrated drag and shook Rogers's hand.

"There are still a few Forgers out there," the Senator said, pointing to the outer perimeter fence. "Have you made any plans for clearing them?"

Rogers nodded. "In fifteen minutes, we'll set off a siren and announce an emergency situation. Nothing specific. Then we'll evacuate the camp through the corridor. If the Forgers haven't cleared out by then..." He shrugged. "The hell with them."

"That could alert the... bogey," the young aide said.

Rogers acknowledged that possibility. "It hasn't done anything for nine months that we know of," he said. "We'll just take the risk. There are about a thousand people out there now."

The woman regarded Rogers with an expression between severe doubt and motherly concern, but said nothing.

"Who else is involved?" Gilmonn

asked.

"I'm having two of my staff officers help me carry the weapon to the entry. They'll evacuate at that point. And there's your expert, of course. Where is he?"

Gilmonn pointed to a figure walking through a spotlighted area a few dozen yards away. "He's coming now."

The "expert" was a young naval lieutenant, lean and of middle height, with thin, precise eyebrows and short-cut tight brown hair, dressed in civvies and carrying a large bag and a briefcase. He greeted the others quietly and asked to be taken to the weapon. Gilmonn opened the gate with the key Rogers had entrusted to him, and then lifted the trunk lid. Within was an orange-striped silver cylinder about a foot and a half-wide and two feet long, lying in an aluminum cradle. The radiation warning trefoil was prominently featured at three points on the cylinder.

"We don't have a presidential authorization code," the lieutenant explained matter-of-factly. "So I've had to take an unarmed, stockpile missile warhead and remove the PAL—the Permissive Action Link, the code box. This causes a fatal mechanical failure in the detonator and proximity fuse—fatal to the mechanism, not to me. So I've had to engineer my own time-fuse and detonator and match them with the warhead. With higher authorization, I've taken a Navy plane wave generator and klystron and the necessary black boxes and cobbled them together. I can guarantee that it will work. Actually, this is a lot simpler than it sounds. We have replacement parts in stock all the time." He smiled almost apologetically and turned to Rogers. "Sir, you will be able to deactivate this weapon, should you encounter something unexpected, right up to the last second before it goes off. So pay close attention."

Rogers listened very carefully as the lieutenant removed a cover plate from one end of the cylinder and explained the procedure. He then explained it all over again, checking Rogers's face at each crucial point to make sure he understood. "Got that, sir?" the lieutenant asked.

"Yes," Rogers said.

"I apologize we couldn't find a backback nuke—a SADM—for you, sir," the lieutenant said. "But they've been out of stock for about twenty years. They've all been scrapped or dumped. This only weighs about a third again as much as the SADM—Special Atomic Demolition Munition,"

FORGE

he explained for the benefit of the senator's aides. "But you should be able to haul it up with no difficulty if the shaft is as smooth as you've said. Then, push and pull it for the next leg, and when you can stand, haul it into position using your backpack. You seem to be in good shape, sir, and you should be able to complete the mission..." The lieutenant shook his head. "Sorry, I don't mean to tell you your business, sir."

"No problem," Rogers said.

"Just one question. Nobody back home was able to answer something for me. How strong is this bogey, internally?"

"We don't know," Rogers said.

"Strong enough, possibly, to have survived a descent from orbit," Gilmonn said.

"If it offers even token resistance to the weapon, then I can't estimate the effect on the surrounding countryside," the lieutenant said. "Unless it stays integral, which I really doubt, there's going to be hot rock and shrapnel all over the valley. I don't know how far away you'll have to be, sir."

"I'll have a truck," Rogers said.

"Drive like hell," the lieutenant recommended. "And another thing. What sort of drive mechanism might it have?"

Rogers shook his head. "There's no outlets, no nozzles or... Nothing we've seen."

"If there is a drive mechanism—which seems logical, if we think of it as a spaceship—then the explosion could set it off."

Rogers took a deep breath. "I've thought about that," he said.

"We've detected no radiation in or around the bogey," Gilmonn said. "If there's any drive mechanism, I doubt very much they use rocket fuel."

"Yeah, but what do they use?" the lieutenant asked.

"Everything we do here involves some risk," Gilmonn said. "And if they think we can be bamboozled by our own imaginations... How much stronger does that make them? What has that kind of thinking done to us already?"

The sirens began to wail, echoing

back from the mountains, painful and terrifying. Loudspeakers around the perimeter announced:

"This is an emergency. This is an emergency. Evacuate all personnel immediately." The message repeated, louder than the sirens, until Rogers felt he might jump out of his skin. Around the site, car horns began to honk. Headlights flashed like the eyes of wary animals. Gilmonn held his hands to his ears. "Are we going ahead, or are we going to stand here and waffle?"

Rogers nodded. "We're on."

The lieutenant reached into the bag and pulled out a white jacket with

*Rogers lifted the
weapon and placed
it in the center
of the chamber.
He played his
torch beam back
down the tunnel.
Three yards below,
the beam met a
dead end.*

a crotch strap. "Residual radiation protection, sir. Put this on now," he shouted over the din. He pulled out another and donned it himself, connecting the crotch flap to a loop on the back.

The jacket weighed perhaps twenty pounds and seemed reasonably flexible, with overlapping sheets of leaded plastic sewn into its fabric.

"You do me, and I'll do you," Rogers helped secure the straps and the lieutenant reciprocated.

"Let's go, sir," the lieutenant said. Together, they lifted the weapon from its cradle in the car's trunk onto a handtruck. It weighed at least sixty-five pounds, perhaps seventy. "No need to be delicate, sir. It's made to withstand missile launch and ocean impact. We'd have to take a sledge hammer to it to do any damage."

Rogers opened the inner perimeter gate and they pulled the handtruck a hundred yards across the pounded sand and gravel trail to the entry hole.

The lieutenant lifted the cylinder from its cradle by himself and lowered it on one end into the sand. The sirens continued to scream and the loud-

speakers repeated the evacuation order, over and over, painfully monotonous.

The first suffusion of dawn outlined the Greenwater Range in ghostly purple. Bouncing headlight beams still cut through the air around the site, but fewer in number now.

"Looks like they're moving out," Gilmonn said.

"Time for the camp to evacuate," Rogers said. "I'll need the lieutenant and one other, that's it."

"I'm staying until you're in the tunnel and the arrow's up there with you," Gilmonn said.

"We call it a 'monkey' now, sir, not an arrow," the lieutenant corrected him.

"Whatever the hell," Gilmonn said.

"Monkey on my back," Rogers said.

The lieutenant pulled an inch-thick Teflon sheet from the weapon's accessory kit and wrapped it tightly around the cylinder, belting it with three straps and a clasp. The top and bottom of the sheet projected over the ends of the cylinder, blunting any sharp edges that might hang up inside the tunnel. He then attached two ropes to sunken eye-bolts in the upper end, on each side of the cover plate. "All set, sir"

Rogers nodded. "Let's go."

The lieutenant removed the cover plate and set the timer. "You have forty minutes, sir, from the time I flip this switch. We'll stay down here for fifteen minutes. You'll have a jeep to drive clear after we leave."

"Understood," Rogers said.

He climbed into the hole, paying out the ropes from loops in his belt, and scrambled to the first bend, then braced himself there. "Bring it up," he said. The lieutenant flipped the switch, closed the plate and hefted the weapon up into the hole. Rogers pulled it up the length of the first segment of the tube, hand-over-hand on the rope.

He then called down to the lieutenant and Gilmonn. "Around the first bend," he said. "I'm climbing the vertical shaft."

"Thirty-five minutes, Colonel," the lieutenant replied.

Rogers glanced up the shaft and held his rasping breath momentarily, trying to hear something. Surely the bogey wouldn't just let him haul the weapon in, without some resistance?

He coiled the ropes and secured them to his belt, then suspended the monkey on a rope secured to a stake he hammered into the lava. He then climbed the chimney as he had before,

(continued on page 70)

OTHER VOICES

This summer CBS aired Alan Brennert's science fiction teleplay "Voices in the Earth" as one of the as one of the final half-hour episodes of its new *Twilight Zone* television series. We are pleased to publish for the first time Alan Brennert's short story version of "Voices in the Earth." In the essay that follows, Brennert recalls the origin of the story, and how he came to write it.

If the souls of the dead are condemned to walk the earth, would they follow into space when humanity migrates to the stars?

Twilight Zone Story Editor Rock O'Bannon had a theory that you couldn't just sit down and come up with half a dozen *Twilight Zone* ideas the way you'd work up story springboards for, say, *Matlock*; they were the kind of off-trail thoughts that occurred to you while you were in the shower—for example the idea above is certainly not the sort of question that would keep most normal people awake nights. Fortunately, for two years I worked for employers who not only encouraged such esoteric speculation, but actually paid me large sums of money to do it, though at the time this particular thought occurred to me—the beginning of the second season of the new *Twilight Zone*—I was not exactly on a roll with CBS. Four of my proposed scripts had just been shot down by them; in fact I thought we'd have to put one of our network liaisons on a respirator after I submitted a story called "The Third Sex." (In the event there are any aspiring screenwriters out there I can tell you, if you were wondering, that quiet love stories about androgynes are not a hot ticket at at least one of the major television networks.) So I approached

"Voices in the Earth" with a bit of trepidation—it was expensive, it was loaded with obscure metaphysical concepts, and it was, as Phil DeGuere would say, "the S word. We don't say the S word." Well, the network surprised me: I pitched it, they liked it, I wrote it and we filmed it. Not that unusual in our first season, but if Season One was, for me at least, Camelot, Season Two was Gormenghast.

Shortly thereafter, CBS yanked the *Zone* off Saturday nights and decreed that all existing hour shows be re-edited, at considerable expense, into half-hours. (After three weeks *TZ*'s ratings against *Cosby* had plunged below even our most dismal Saturday numbers, leaving *Simon & Simon* and *Designing Women* piled up in our wake like a three-car collision on the Harbor Freeway.) "Voices" ran a bit over thirty minutes; I spent three days in the editing room cutting some seven or eight minutes out of it to squeeze it into a half-hour time slot. Oddly enough, the cuts helped the pacing and I was fairly pleased with the final result. But there were some nice scenes that got left on the cutting room floor, as well as some nice character moments that never made it into the final script; which brings us to this short story. It's essentially a reinterpretation of the same idea in a different medium; I took the basic plot, added and embellished to it, threw out things better suited to film than prose, and along the way discovered new things about this world and these characters that I had never imagined existed while writing the script. So whether or not you saw the televised episode, much of what follows should, I think, be new to you. It was certainly new to me.

—Alan Brennert



Alan Brennert on the genesis of "Voices in the Earth."





VOICES IN THE EARTH

*From the ruins of a dead world
came whispers of a distant past.*

by Alan Brennert

ILLUSTRATION BY DAVID LEVINSON

It was a sad, wounded world, its atmosphere a sickly shade of yellow-green—clouds of roiling gas obscuring surface features, tumbling restlessly from pole to pole like a sleeper caught in perpetual nightmare. Knowles watched its yellow disk grow larger in the viewport, absently noting the shadow of the planet's moon as it crossed the equator. From far off, it seemed, he heard Jacinda's voice as she logged the incoming data from ship's sensors: *Atmosphere at perfect chemical equilibrium ... predominantly carbon dioxide, with traces of methane, ammonia, water vapor ...* A small, analytical part of Knowles's mind listened, noted the deadly array of chemicals in the atmosphere, and wondered about the efficacy of the environment suits they would have to wear on the surface. But a larger part of him felt merely sad, and increasingly disturbed by the appearance of the poisoned world ahead. He heard himself saying, softly: "What gives the atmosphere that—awful yellow color?"

Jacinda Carlyne peered into a sensor readout, the LCD briefly washing her dark brown skin in an amber light. "Iron oxides," she said matter-of-factly. "From the rusting cities. When life vanished from this planet, the free oxygen bonded to anything that was at hand—mostly, the iron in abandoned machinery, vehicles, building superstructures ..."

Knowles frowned. A tall man with a long face, he looked sober and

preoccupied even when he was not; now his bushy eyebrows—grayer, oddly, than the rest of his hair—knitted together. "Sensors show no life-forms whatever?"

Jacinda passed a hand over some instrumentation; her body heat spurred a momentary hum of activity as the computers ran; then she shook her head, regretfully.

"Nothing. Not even the presence of simple amino acids in the oceans. The last recon was right: it's a dead world."

Knowles shut his eyes. One of the two technicians on the scoutship, Archer—tall, blond, the gentler of the two, quite the contrast to bluff, impatient Bledsoe—came up behind Knowles and eyed the image on the viewport with some degree of interest, real or feigned. "There was a name for this one, in one of the old languages, wasn't there, Professor?"

Knowles opened his eyes, nodded, looked at the dead planet drawing slowly nearer.

"Yes," he said, quietly. "Earth. They called it Earth."

The scoutship dropped through the atmosphere like a spider descending on a strand of web, its tripodlike legs opening as it breached the poisonous envelope of gases. Inside, on the small, grayly functional bridge, Knowles could feel the subtle shift in the engine vibrations as the ship switched to plasma drive for landing. The thought of

VOICES

all that heat and energy pouring out, in an atmosphere of methane and other potentially flammable chemicals, worried him; but Jacinda had assured him that with no vegetation to replenish the long-depleted oxygen supply, no reactions were possible. Knowles sighed to himself. He'd never particularly cared for spaceflight, but just now even the narrow seats in the Proxima-Galthor star liner seemed appealing; disconcerting to travel forty light-years in a small ship like this. He felt as though he'd spent the last two weeks in a barrel dropped over—what was the name of that waterfall on Old Earth? Niagara? That was what traveling in non-Einsteinian space felt like—one long, continuous fall, like a parachutist who never hit the ground. The bigger ships had enormous gravity generators to compensate, but a four-person survey craft was much too small to accommodate one.

"Donald?" Jacinda looked up at him, and Knowles saw two people in the dark oval of her face: the mineralogist, sober, thoughtful, commanding the survey team for ReSource; and the quiet, reflective college student she had been fifteen years ago, sitting in his lecture hall on Galthor, listening with rapt attention to the histories of a dozen worlds. Somehow he had always thought she would go on to become an archaeologist. Perhaps, in an odd sort of way, she had.

"Island on visual," she said, nodding toward the viewport, drawing his attention to the land mass appearing, hazily, through the yellow gases. Knowles leaned forward, suddenly excited, as the long promontory came into clear view. Manhattan Island, they'd called it. In its day it, and the city it was a part of, were the unofficial capital of this planet—three hundred square miles of living structures, business towers, roadways, pedestrian ramps—a population, at its height in the twenty-first century, of nearly twenty million. Knowles had studied tapes and photographs, knew the history of the city from its colonial beginnings as New Amsterdam to its ultimate fall from glory in the great diaspora. It had been a thriving, dynamic metropolis; primitive, yes, but rivalling the Cluster Worlds for

sheer dynamism. And now—

Now it was a graveyard. The city loomed larger in the viewport, and Knowles felt a knot begin to build in his stomach. The buildings were still there, their concrete skin eroded and pitted over the long wait of centuries; many of the superstructures had been reinforced with new alloys in the twenty-second century, but after this long, even they were decaying. The rusted stumps of two enormous towers straddled the southwest shore of the island; in the harbor stood the statue of what was once a woman, one arm upraised but broken off at the wrist, large gaping holes amid the folds of

Knowles leaned forward, suddenly excited, as Manhattan came into view. In its day it had been a dynamic, thriving metropolis. And now—now it was a graveyard.

her robe exposing the rusted framework beneath. Beyond the harbor lay a stagnant ocean—gray-green in color, with a texture less like water than mercury. No trees, or grass, or vegetation of any kind marked the landscape; and the entire tableau was bathed in the pale, jaundiced light of an aging sun, filtered through the poisonous air of the New Earth.

"We'll land on that plain over there, in the middle of the island," Jacinda said. Archer nodded, adjusted his navigation board; the vibrations changed again as the ship slowed further. It wasn't until they were right on top of it that Knowles realized that the "plain" was, in fact, Central Park—a desolate stretch of bedrock denuded of vegetation. The engines shuddered as the ship touched down, and Donald Knowles, who had spent the better part of a lifetime studying the history, the people, the soul of a planet he had glimpsed only in tapes and books, returned at last to the Earth he had never known.

They worked their way slowly through the bleak, defoliated park,

protected by the shimmer of the energy membranes generated by their environment suits. The lakes, ponds, and reservoir—once a mecca for lunchtime office workers, or weekend visitors—were long since evaporated. The cages of the zoo stood rusted and decaying; Cleopatra's needle, once a spire standing amid tall trees, was little more than broken pedestal. On the outskirts of the park was the Metropolitan Museum of Art—empty, of course, stripped long ago of its treasures... slowly, over the course of a century, as humanity migrated to the stars.

They crossed Fifth Avenue, probing deeper into the city; though most buildings still stood, many were truncated or fallen in on themselves, massive concrete blocks scattered about in odd-shaped piles, like latter-day Stonehenges. Jacinda and Knowles led the way. Archer and Bledsoe behind them. Jacinda looked around at the remains of Fifth Avenue, moved by the silence and the emptiness; her tone was soft. "It's like one of those little ghost towns in the High Desert, back on Elsinore..."

Bledsoe was unmoved. "Yeah. Real tourist spot," he said, with obvious distaste. "I don't know about anyone else, but I am sick to death of traipsing around these mudballs."

Knowles shot him a sharp, irritated look. "This one is different," he said, an edge to his voice. Bledsoe shrugged. "A rock's a rock. They all look the same once they've been mined."

Knowles bristled. "It's not a 'rock!' It's the cradle, the birthplace of humanity."

Bledsoe looked around, unimpressed. "Looks to me like we got out just in time."

Knowles burned but said nothing. Jacinda noted his anger, wondering if Bledsoe's sentiments were genuine or intended largely to irritate Knowles; technicians hated taking civilian observers on duty like this, and the two weeks' travel time to Earth had been tense and uneasy. She decided to ignore Bledsoe's belligerence—for the moment. "Mr. Archer, Mr. Bledsoe: you can start taking your readings any time. Professor Knowles and I will go on ahead." The two technicians began setting up the sensors that would give them, within a week's time, a spectroscopic analysis of the remaining minerals in the Earth's crust; Jacinda and Knowles walked on, taking in the sad, somber face of the dead city. For a moment, Jacinda felt as though she were back on Galthor, viewing history

tapes in Knowles's lecture hall ... but far from launching into one of his enthusiastic dissertations on the terrestrial history, Knowles was oddly silent; awed, perhaps, by the faded beauty around him.

"Donald?" He turned to look at her. "Earth was stripped of artifacts long ago. Just what do you hope to find here?"

Knowles shrugged. "I don't know. A feeling ... a sense of place ... what it must've been like to live here, back when the skies were blue, and the oceans green with plankton. If I can capture some hint of that ... if I can put it into words ..." A touch of self-deprecation crept into his voice. "Thirty years ago—ten years ago—I wouldn't doubt that I could, but now..."

"Donald, don't. Your writing is as good as ever. Your book on the first Dyson Colonies was wonderful."

Knowles's eyebrows shot up in surprise and pleasure. "You read that?" He smiled. "Well. At my age, I suppose, you start putting more credence in your bad reviews than the good ones. Thank you." He stopped walking, looked at Jacinda with fondness. "And thank you, Jacinda, for getting me on this survey. I know it couldn't have been an easy task. But it could do wonders for an old academic's failing reputation."

"Not that old, I think, and not that failing," she said gently. She started to say something more, when her communicator buzzed; she tabbed the microphone at the base of her helmet, near her larynx. "Yes?"

"Sensors operational and ready to go." Archer's voice, Jacinda nodded to herself, tabbed the *transmit* circuit: "Be right there. Carlyne out." She turned to Knowles, feeling uneasy about what she had to say next. "Donald, I ... I can draw this out for an extra day or two, but ... I'm afraid I can't give you much more than that. A week, ten days at the most. After that, I'll have to give word for our mining vessels to move in and extract whatever's salvageable, and—"

"And if I haven't found that sense of place by then ... there may not be a place left to have any sense of?" He nodded. "Yes. I understand."

Jacinda looked in his eyes, saw the pain and helplessness he was trying hard to conceal ... and she knew that he did, indeed, understand. Better, perhaps, than any of them.

He spent the rest of the day walking the ruined face of Manhattan

—from Times Square across Forty-second Street to the East River, then north to the broken towers of the George Washington Bridge on the western shore. All the while Knowles tried to imagine himself living here, in one of these concrete blocks, the sounds of traffic waking him in the morning—so unlike Galthor, whose business districts were purposely separated from its residential complexes. He found a working elevator in one of the steel-and-glass buildings on Fifth Avenue, and with a bit of trepidation rode up to the tenth floor, trying to envision himself a twentieth century worker as he sat at one of the



dozens of identical desks. Leaving the building, he wondered about the trip to work—what it must have been like, heading for the office along with thousands, millions of other human beings, in such close proximity—and remembered the subway tunnels beneath him. Excitedly, he searched out the nearest entrance and headed down into the darkness of the subway station.

His path illuminated by the infrared beam in his suit, Knowles climbed over the rusted turnstile, studied with fascination the graffiti on the cement walls, walked down the tunnel about half a kilometer to where a subway train stood, lifeless as it had for centuries. He pried open the door; it buckled easily under his touch, nearly falling off. He stood in the car, eyes shut, trying to wish himself back, a thousand years or more—

And heard voices.

His eyes snapped open. He expected the sounds to vanish, dream-sounds dimming as his reverie faded ... but, if anything, they seemed to become louder. They were the sounds and voices of rush-hour commuters ... of a hundred people jammed side-

by-side in a subway car, talking, yelling above the roar of the train ... except there was no roar, just voices, voices straining to be heard above a sound that did not exist. And they seemed to be coming from the next car ...

Like a man underwater, unsure of his own senses, Knowles slowly approached the rear door, opened it, and stepped over the platform linking this car to the next. The voices seemed to become louder. He grasped the door-knob, his hands inside his gloves suddenly sweaty, and opened the door—

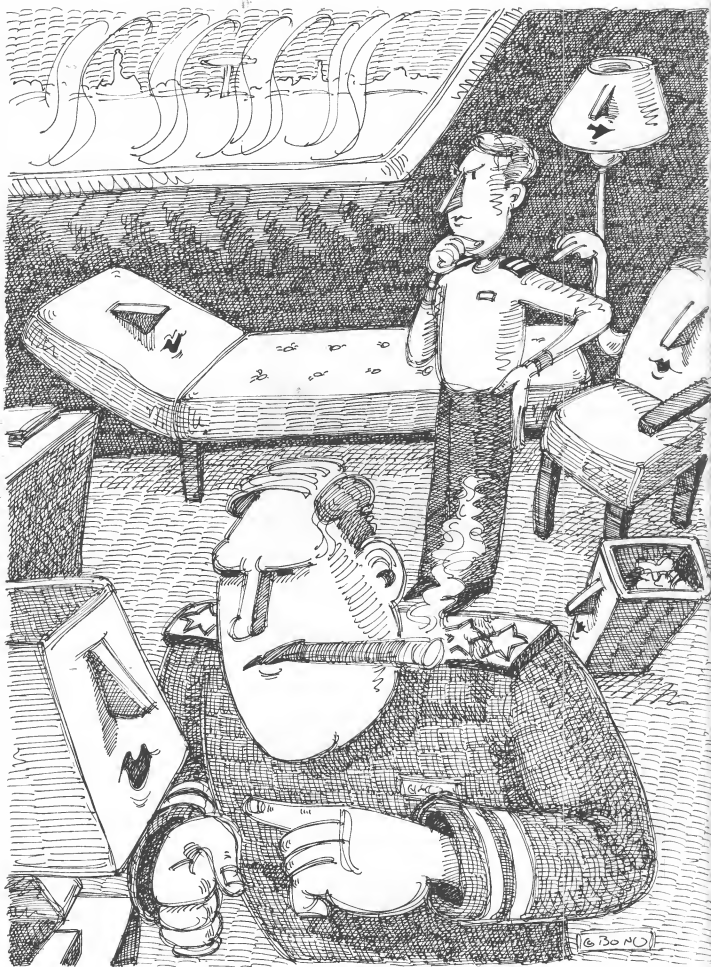
The voices ceased, abruptly, as though Knowles had stumbled gauche-ly into a private party, without an invitation. He stood there in the sudden silence, feeling like a fool, or a madman, or both ... and decided that he had explored the subways enough for one day. He retreated, quickly, to the surface, back to the sallow light growing even dimmer as dusk began to fall.

He glanced at his watch. Sixteen-hundred hours. About half an hour before he had to rendezvous with the others back at the ship. He looked around at the street he found himself on—a commercial district chock-a-block with the gutted remains of department stores, bookshops, and boutiques—his attention snagged by one shop in particular. On the window, dust-encrusted but just barely legible, was the name MUSIC & MEMORIES; and below that, AUDIO — VIDEO — HOLO. His fear and puzzlement over what had happened in the subway was supplanted by excitement at the prospect of what he might find in the music store; he hurried inside.

The wall shelves were filled with ancient pieces of electronics equipment from about the twenty-second century—holographic tape players and projectors, octophonic music systems—and, in the middle of the store, Knowles found row upon row of metal bins, most of them empty, but a few still full. Eagerly, he began flipping through their contents: old laser-encoded discs, ranging in size from two to five inches in diameter. Knowles was barely able to restrain his hopes; theoretically, the digitalized music on these discs, protected by a non-corrosive plastic, should still be capable of playback—but after a thousand years—?

He took a disc from a bin, went to one of the octo players on the wall. He took out a small, spherical battery from the utility pack on his belt, plugged the player into the battery, inserted the disc—

(continued on page 72)



AMBITION

*Sometimes the difference
between war and peace is only
a matter of semantics.*

by Barry N. Malzberg

ILLUSTRATION BY PETER BONO

The captain choked. "You don't say? You mean the filthy little buggers are sentient? They have intelligence? They can talk?" He flicked ash into the wastebasket.

"Bloody right," the wastebasket said. It extended a ridge into pseudopod, tamped the ashes. "We're as smart as any of you and tired of being used as furniture. Understand?"

"It was a matter of establishing communication," I whispered. "I am the communications officer. Finding a code which they could apprehend. After that it was just a matter of time until they could pick up the language, vocalize and all that stuff."

"Jubal," the captain said. "A bunch of aliens—"

"Jubilation," the wastebasket said. "We'd prefer you refer to the planet properly." Its pseudopod grasped the cigar, yanked it from the captain's hand. "Sooner or later, you explorers are just going to have to realize the whole universe isn't at your service. We're not passive, you know. Not by instinct."

"Headquarters," the captain said to me. "Put it into them. They'll know what to do." A frantic smirk curled his honest features. "These little swine are insolent. They think they're superior—"

I said nothing. Communications is a two-way business. Sometimes it is best even for a communications officer to be silent.

"They're on the march," the general said. His detachment had landed in haste but recently. "From all of Jubal they have stumbled to life, assumed the shapes of militia and moved

toward the Dome. We calculate—"

"Jubilation," I said.

"What's that?"

"They prefer their world to be known by its full name. In their language it is 'Jubilation'. Not to interfere," I said delicately. "I am only trying to make explicit—"

"Make what explicit?" the general said. "They'll be on the Dome, thousand of them, in just a matter of hours!"

I shrugged delicately. "They're very angry."

"How did this happen?" the general asked. "None of this was calculated."

The captain pointed to me. "Him. He did this. Him and that communications shack. They could have gone on peacefully being wastebaskets and blankets and opticals. But this one—"

"Calm down," the general said. "Maybe they couldn't be stopped."

"They could have been stopped!" the captain said. His fury was evident. I have commented on this before, I believe. The man is choleric. "It's all a plot," he said, cunningly. "The man's a traitor. Communications! He's probably told them that he's their king."

"Come now," the general said. "Clearly, you're overreacting." He looked at me. "I think so, anyway. What do you say?"

I shrugged, delicately. From the far corner, a wall winked at me. I did not wink back, gave no indication. Except for the smallest motion of a forefinger. Control is absolute. Without control there is no communication. That is the first and last of all the

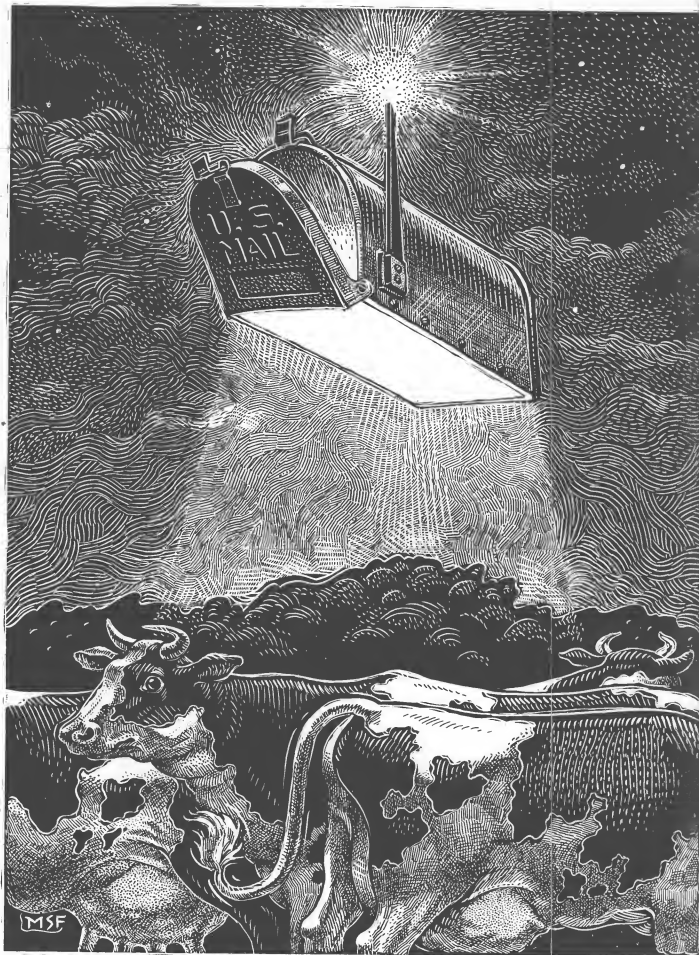
truths with which we must embark.

"Traitor," the captain said. But it was the general whom he was addressing. It was not me. I am sure of that.

Later, after the troops of Jubilation have overrun the station, dealt with all of the personnel therein (always excepting this faithful correspondent and the captain who is being held for further observation), after the troops of Jubilation have secured the Dome against missiles and have sent the general back with a notice of conditional demand, we hold a discussion. "You have to understand," I point out, "that I'm neutral in this matter. What has happened here is most disastrous. You have shown little taste in the matter. On the other hand, I do admit that you had provocation. The communications should have begun long before."

"No concern," says the delegate from Jubilation who, for old time's sake, has assumed the form of a comfortable sofa upon which at this very moment I am resting precariously. Juniors are grouped in the background as hassocks, chaises-lounge and so on. Lamps and fixtures. "We take that into account. We are an aggressive and warlike clan under our mimetic exterior and once you made the reality of this situation known it's inevitable that we would take measures. You'll be forgiven, I am sure. In the immediate, however, there is an enormous militia coming our way, I fear, and although the shields are up, it's only temporary. They can overrun us unless we find a good plan. Suggestion?"

(continued on page 41)



MSF

ALIEN MAIL TO THE WHITE HOUSE EXCLUSIVE: THE PLOOK LETTERS

The inside scoop about the government's secret encounter with extraterrestrial beings.

by Jay Sheckley

ILLUSTRATION BY MARY FLOCK

The press has unearthed an unearthly scandal: Presidential Aide Simon Blythesmythe confirms that the White House hushed up its correspondence with outer-space intelligences now living among us in rural post-office boxes.

Although this publication was served with a Federal restraining order barring publication in the interests of national and global security, our accountants assure us that the public's need to know will dwarf our court-costs.

So, nobly, we stand up for the first amendment by offering in full this correspondence stolen by our correspondents.

FROM:
ZBINK PLOOK

Box 40
Scott's Mills, Oregon

Dear Mr. President,

Profoundest welcoming noises to you, Sir, at your start of work as Leader!

I represent a ferretlike race of beings from the one bearable planet circling the star you may know as G-391. We have a highly developed technology, but still find telephones disagreeable.

Having whooshed through unendful star-specked expanse to meet with you, I ask your response via Western Union Nightletter proposing a place

and time for our meeting. Anything is good for me save Tuesday nights, on which I have obligation playing frumfrump organ for our morale jamboree.

We meet I hope soon to discuss pieces of business which concern your people and mine.

Sincerely,
ZBINK PLOOK
Federation of G-391 Nations

FROM:
RONALD REAGAN

September 13, 1981
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. Plook,

Thank you for your kind words on the new administration. I'm only sorry Nancy and I didn't have a chance to invite you to the inauguration, because it's optimistic citizens like yourself who I'm concerned with every day.

As I set about the tasks entrusted to me, I shall spare no effort building our nation into the great force God intended it to be. Major economic programs are underway. On the domestic front, Nancy inventoried all the White House buffetware, while I am working closely with the Environmental Protection Agency. As for the international scene, you can relax, secure that the Defense Department is devising and implementing

new strategies to promote peaceful alliances overseas.

With your support, my job is that much easier. I thank you.

Sincerely,
RONALD REAGAN

FROM:
ZBINK PLOOK

December 21, 1981
Box 40
Scott's Mills, Oregon

Dear President Reagan,

Wishing you, Sir, correct tidings for Happy Xmas!

I puzzled much at your letter. Either your customs are not as I believed or I commit some error in becoming understood.

Again: I am Zbink Plook (not Mr. Plook, however, as I am no more one gender than another) and I represent a federation of states on the sole inhabited planet orbiting star G-391. I journeyed multious light years, enduring enforced hibernation along with the rest of my Committee, in order to impart certain data to you. We have reason to believe any world would pay mightily for this information which we offer as our Present of Greeting.

Soon contact me at above address. (Below address takes longer.)

Sincerely,
ZBINK PLOOK
Ambassador to the United States
G-391 Federation

PLOOK

FROM:
RONALD REAGAN

October 10, 1984

The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mrs. Plook,

Thank you for your report on the conditions in your community. From your views, I gain insight into the pulse of the nation. I will never forget that it's communities like yours and their faith in me that make worthwhile my work and the work of all those fine men and women on my team.

Although I cannot just now answer every point you mention, I promise you this: My aides and I are busy making these United States safe and prosperous, not only here, but *throughout* this troubled globe.

I am deeply moved by your continued interest in the Presidency. Dedication is a rare quality. Unlike Mr. Mondale, I haven't got the time to comprehend increasing your taxes or the rest of that mythical deficit mumbo-jumbo. And although it may just cost me this crucial election, as President, I have duties far more pressing than campaigning. Among other things lined up, my next term will squelch terrorism, perfect the Star Wars Safety Umbrella, detoxify our kids' drug-infested environment, save American hostages, and deliver the glory of our first Teacher in Space.

When we stand together on November 6, I say: may the best man win.

I hope to hear from you again.

Sincerely,
RONALD REAGAN

FROM:
ZBINK PLOOK

March 15, 1985

Box 40
Scott's Mills, Oregon

Dear President Ronald Reagan,

Before business, I understand Congratulations are in order. On behalf of the G-391 Federation, we Congratulate your victory at the polls: Congratulations! We hope you are finding this Congratulations in

proper order.

In this newest letter, you mention your aides and your team. You wish myself or my Committee to meet with one of your many assistants? Although not optimal, it is certainly possible. The Committee decided we are all most happy to see you or your aide(s) in your locale, as this is most major business. Please only provide us a definite date and time.

(I beg to mention: Mrs. Plook is incorrect as I have no gender and therefore no mate.)

Sincerely,
ZBINK PLOOK
Ambassador, G-391 Federation

*"On behalf of
the entire G-391
Federation,
Greetings!*

*One concern:
What is correct
mourning period
for death of
Presidential
nose-tip?"*

FROM:
ROLLEY SMITH, HEAD
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA CHAMBER OF
COMMERCE

November 6, 1985

Dear Ms. Plook,

The White House forwarded your letter to us and we've taken the liberty of sending along a half dozen brochures of White House tours for your committee. You can see the list of starting times on page two. Also enclosed are package-tour information and airline schedules.

Enjoy your trip to our nation's beautiful capital. If I can help you in any way, let me know.

The place to be is D.C.!

Best,
ROLLEY SMITH Head
D.C. Chamber of Commerce

FROM:
ZBINK PLOOK

March 15, 1986

Box 40
Scott's Mills, Oregon

Dear Rolley Smith, Head:

On behalf of the entire G-391 Federation, Greetings! To your nation and planet we extend most deep empathetic sobbings. Although they were not ferretlike creatures as we, understand we too hurt with the loss not only of Space Teacher but her brave Committee.

Now, we catch news of a more personal loss, part of Mr. President's nose. Forgive that we interrupt your distress, respondent to your letter.

We are most pleased and excited to be meeting with a distinguished citizen like yourself to discuss matters affectant of your solar system and ours. Although we appreciate your gracious offer to send aircraft, we shall fly in our own vehicles. One concern:

Your generous schedule was sent before the tragic occurrences for which we condoned you at top. Can you inform: how long is correct mourning for death of the Presidential nose-tip? We are a disciplined Committee, able to wait all needed months to meet you without scorching etiquette.

(By the way, Ms. Plook is incorrect as I have no gender.)

We await.

Sincerely,
ZBINK PLOOK, Ambassador
Federation of G-391 Nations

FROM:
ZBINK PLOOK

March 1, 1987

Dear Rolley Smith, Head:

Less enthused yet respectful greeting noises from your colleague Zbink Plook. Greetings, Mr. Head! This month comes our one year anniversary waiting for your mourning protocol. Will you not set an appointment? Then we will.

As stated, we are happily anxious to meet with you, Distinguished Citizen, (and Mr. President, be he well and not molting) to discuss matters affectant of your solar system and ours. Again, we appreciate your offer of aircraft, but prefer, for comfort, to fly our own.

We bring technical papers converted in your language, plus else of interest to Mr. President Ronald Reagan and those working closely with this Dignitary.

Unless contacted, our arrival is during Talk Radio Hour, morning, April 10th.

We look forward Mr. Head!
Sincerely,
ZBINK PLOOK, Ambassador

Federation of G-391 Nations
[Copy also to President
Ronald Reagan]

FROM:
RONALD REAGAN

March 31, 1987

The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. Plook,

Heartfelt thanks for your kinds words about our administration at this time. I'm only sorry Nancy and I didn't have a chance to invite you and your family to our Just Say No Sports banquet. After all, it's good-hearted Americans like yourself who I'm concerned with every day. Can't remember what you did last March? Well, we all do the best darn job we can and each day we start fresh.

Last night Nancy said something I'd like to pass along. She said, "Mr. Baker, Ronnie's got plenty to be proud of these past years." She's right. This country has lots to crow about. We've had tea with the Russkies, but never once lost our right to detonate Nevada. Thanks to Nancy, drug testing went coast to coast, and will soon influence every workplace, school, and home. We're proud of holding back the Evil Empire, proud of Chief Justice Rehnquist, proud of flattening Quaddafi's tent—proud that so many of us did more work at home and abroad than we can even remember. And we're proud of Ed Meese, who wrote such a good report that Nancy won't let me read it.

Seriously, now, we've forged onward with every task entrusted to me. Daily our nation grows greater and more powerful. With your support—of each of my many million friends receiving this letter—You better believe my job is made that much easier.

Thanks—for being an American.

Sincerely,
RONALD REAGAN

FROM:
ZBINK PLOOK

April 31, 1987

Box 7990, Washington, DC

Dear Mr. President and with respect
to His Wife,

Heed our Greeting. Hello! Grateful appreciations in receipt of confounding letter. Beseeching noises, Sir! Convey our belted squeals of greeting and profoundest salutation to

Most Instrumental First lady. Now to Business:

With many type gifts for you, including foodstuffs, engineering fibers, gizmos, balms, and bombs, I and my Committee came to Washington D.C. We remain to ask: Where are you? Where is Secretly Very Important Nancy?

At Commerce Chamber, Mr. Head referred me to Mr. Ollie North, who we saw at his job, which is saying that his secretary Ms. Fawn Hall now is busy. After speaking with Mr. Ollie of our Present of Greeting offered, we request: Does Mr. North truly assistant for you? Because we



are taught, Don't arm critters who prefer new guns to new medicines.

Mr. President Reagan, esteemed First Lady: My fellow aliens have been trying to contact a Leader in this nation since its inception in 1776, and with frustratingly little result. By Next Tuesday, I personally, Zbink Plook, Ambassador of all G-391 Nations, will have been on this Earth waiting to meet a President for exactly 100 years.

You are afforded last chance for reply; Let's hope it is to the point. Can you meet with us?

Sincerely,
ZBINK PLOOK, Ambassador
Federation of G-391 Nations
[N.B. Not "Mr. Plook," just Zbink Plook.]

TELEGRAM:

FROM
THE WHITE HOUSE

May 7, 1987

DEAR MRS PLOOK:
THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED
STATES WISHES YOU A HAPPY
ONE HUNDREDTH BIRTHDAY! ■

AMBITION

(continued from page 37)

I run my hand over his leathery surfaces. Sentiment, unbidden, floods: after all, we have had moments of true communion. It is hard to find a good hassock on these missions. "I think we should just explain the reasons. Maybe they'll accept it."

"and if not?" a fluorescent appliance says, "what they?"

"Don't you have other resources?"

"You're so direct," the sofa says delicately, shifting underneath as if to blush, if there is such a thing as a tactile blush. "You've taught us so well."

"One must endeavor to communicate."

"At all costs," the fluorescence agrees.

After the invasion and extermination (an inevitable response to the obdurate refusal of the task force to hear the Jubilation explanations), I am set up in quarters henceforth to be known as the Throne Room and there, surrounded by my council, am consulted as to the next move. They are, after all, accustomed by now to taking suggestions; aggressive on one level, they are humble on the other. Humility is that from which I draw my own sustenance. "I think that we should think a while," I say. "Carefully weigh alternatives."

Several Jubilations have reconstituted themselves as serving girls and houris. They bow delicately. "A long while," I say. "Maybe longer than that," I offer.

I help myself to an exquisite narcotic. "We might want to ponder conquest."

"Conquest?"

"You can become massive

spacecraft and armaments, yes?"

From Jubilation, fixtures and houris alike stare.

"Well, why not? We agreed on stern measures from the beginning."

"Ah," an houri says, "sternness. It is an interesting and unusual quality."

I say nothing.

"Are most of you like this?" I am asked.

I shrug. A delicate and extended silence continues. Sometimes, as headquarters has been so patient to teach us, deeds overtake words.

Ah, such deeds! ■



DAVI LEIKO TILL MIDNIGHT

*She was his fantasies made flesh.
And Free Night was her chance to be real.*

by William F. Wu

ILLUSTRATION BY JULIE EVANS

Mac Tom rocked back on pointed boots, dodging bluff and sweaty young stampedes past him crosswise on the corner. The Aysquare night was bluff and sweaty in the summer darkness, lit up Free Night neon over jammed human traffic. Davi Leiko was out here somewhere, if he could only find her.

Mac started across the street, into a light bit of breeze that cooled the flush of his face. Overhead, lines of partygoers floated nose first in astral form toward the old houses on the north side. Golden threads trailed after them, connected to their comatose bodies at home in bed. Just as they had divided and reconstituted themselves, Mac had defined and constructed Davi Leiko.

She was out here in the sea of laughing, conniving, bluff and sweaty bodies, if he could only find her. He could still retrieve her for fullness, if he got her back before midnight. He could still retrieve her to be the love of his life, if he could only find her before midnight.

"Hi, Phil. How are you?" A tall, smiling man in a black beard stopped on the sidewalk, oblivious to the jostling he took from the passing crowd.

"I'm not Phil. I'm Mac. But I'm fine, John. How are you?"

"It's great to see you, Phil. Just great. Are you getting paid?"

"Uh—yeah. Sure. Bye, John." Mac moved on, carried by the sweep of bluff and sweaty.

"Bye, Phil," said John, still smiling white in his black beard.

John had not been brought to fullness.

Far overhead, beyond the storefront building, the clock tower shone grayish white against a deep and mystic sky. Midnight was an evening away.

Rivers of cars drifted lazily down the paved gullies of Aysquare, chrome-caps shining in the wash of light. Off to Mac's right, beyond the rumbling crowd and beneath the flood of astral travelers, Davi Leiko climbed up on the trunk of a slowly moving sleek and slippery blue fatcar. Mac looked,

missed, blinked, looked again.

Her amber skin gleamed naked in the cross of white headlights and red neon. She climbed awkwardly in leather pumps of mandarin red, four-inch heels sliding on the waxed polish of the car. Her legs, slender and not very long, tensed and bent and straightened as she caught her balance and lifted one knee high to climb on the shining roof of the rolling car.

Mac watched in fascination as he swam upstream through a crowd of grinning schoolgirls in matching blue plaid skirts. His arms plied the current, but the cars were still flowing slowly down the street away from him. Mac slid behind four hockey players in full equipment marching in lockstep clumsily on their skates, who were sweating profusely.

Above and ahead of him, Davi Leiko's raised leg stretched her round rear smooth and yellowish where the bikini had drawn a line. She pushed with her other leg and fell forward onto the roof of the car, swinging around sideways spread-legged as it jerked for-

LEIKO

ward in traffic. She rolled to one side and then, as the car stopped, sprawled once more, grabbing for handholds on the slick surface.

"Fu look, fu look, fu look," chanted a chorus of male voices.

Mac backed to the picture window of a health food restaurant as a rout of young Chinese men strode in front of him, wearing tan conical hats of woven banana leaves.

"Fu look, fu look, fu look." Still chanting, they pushed on down the sidewalk, grinning and nudging each other at the Cantonese nose, lips, and jaw of the gorgeous naked Davi Leiko.

The therapist, a slender woman in her forties with a sparkling smile, eyed him impassively from behind a high walnut desk, with stacks of books piled even higher on it. "C'mon, Mac. Admit it. You never really loved any woman. Maybe you never really loved anyone at all."

Mac shook his head. "Of course I have. I always have. There was ... when I was in high school. And in college, I had ... and ..."

"Hmm?" She was still impassive. "You skipped the names, I believe."

"No, I didn't."

"Yes, you did."

"No, I didn't."

"You keep making artificials because real people are too hard for you to handle."

"No; I don't. And stop contradicting me. You aren't supposed to do that, are you?"

She smiled with quiet amusement. "What good is loving an artificial? They aren't real."

"Well ... except on Free Night, no one knows the difference."

"For you, though. You'd know she was an artificial. It would make a difference to you."

"Actually, since no one is allowed to tailor an artificial personality past a certain point, they can be almost as frustrating."

"In that case, why not stick with real people?"

Mac yanked open the glass door of the Ice O' My Grotto video parlor and slipped inside. When the door shut behind him, the noise and heat

and roar of the street stopped dead. The video parlor was cool, and silent except for the strange muffled whines and explosions of the games. One player screamed just before flashing up in a swirl of orange and blue flame. Just past him, Davi Leiko stood naked in her mandarin red pumps and her smiling, pursed, full red Cantonese lips, playing an old-fashioned pinball machine. She snapped the first ball forward, and her twin round Cantonese breasts quivered at the blinking, ringing lights.

Mac looked upon her with jealousy and loss as he walked toward her. She swayed forward and back as she played

Davi Leiko turned to him, her black hair swept away from her face in a frame of slight waves. She was stunningly gorgeous, of course, that's how he'd made her.

the game, watching the rolling silver balls with quick brown foxy eyes. Her arms, like all of her, were smooth and fleshy but firm, tanned just slightly tawny, like all of her, outside her bikini line.

"You shouldn't have left." Mac spoke quietly, not wanting to throw her off her game.

"It's Free Night. Everybody's out." She kept her eyes on the game, and snapped another ball into play. "Everybody who's full and everybody who's near fullness."

"You aren't ready yet. Just one more week. Or two."

"I feel ready." She smiled pleasantly, and glanced at him for his reaction.

"I just wanted you right, first. You don't have—well, a couple of things."

"I don't?" She pursed her lips, trying to hide an impish smile. "Don't I look like I have everything?"

"You know what I mean. Your anger is still missing, and a sense of personal insult—the desire for revenge if someone hurts you. You'll be helpless out here. Also, that one front tooth of yours isn't right. The gum around it is gray instead of pink."

Davi Leiko turned full-front to look at him, ignoring the bouncing bells and lights and silver ball rolling around in her game. Her flowing black hair was swept away from her face in a frame of slight waves. She was stunningly gorgeous, of course; that's how he'd decided to make her.

"You can't force me back. I know that. I'm at stage nine now." Davi Leiko looked up at him ingenuously, as the silver ball in the machine rolled unchallenged between the flippers and clunked somewhere out of sight.

"I would never want to force you." Mac's voice rose in pitch very slightly, with anxiety. "Fullness will help you in the long run. You'll fit in better. Wouldn't you like to come back and finish?"

She shrugged, and leaned one elbow on the pinball machine as she looked at him. "I feel full."

"This is Free Night. Everything's different. I mean, normally, you couldn't even walk the street like ... like that." Mac waved a fluttery hand at her naked body.

Davi Leiko looked down at herself. "Well, I have that information stored. I could, you know, do what's necessary on regular days to fit in. Like wear clothes."

"I made you. I made you with the blood in my brain. With my mind."

"The last stage is just personality refining. I know that. That's why I'm not required to go through it. I really am complete, you know. Not reaching fullness just means I won't be totally tailored by you. Some of me resulted from random coalescing. I know all that." Her tone was confident and mature without sounding contrived.

Mac sighed. He had done such a good job with her that she certainly could pass for normal on regular days, as required for emancipation. The realization stung.

Davi Leiko straightened suddenly and walked quickly past him, her legs taut and sleek over the red mandarin pumps and her round breasts jiggling from her staccato stride. Mac turned to watch her go. Her wavy black hair bounced slightly across her square shoulders, in counter-rhythm to the sway of her small round rear. A moment later, she was outside and gone.

Out on the crowded street again, Mac tumbled toward midnight under the gleaming clock tower. The sleepy rivers of cars ran thick as blood through the pedestrian flesh of bluff and sweaty Free Night wanderers.

"Well, hello there." The voice was

a gravelly contralto from a wrinkled redhead, pretty and freckled and blue-eyed.

Mac started in surprise. "Oh—how are you?"

"Oh-fine." She smiled, nodding. "Back door knob, garage lock, hydraulic seal, bedroom vent."

"What?"

"So how've you been, Mac?" Shower curtain."

"Aw, Carol. Why didn't you come back with me and finish? You could've been so good, in fullness."

"I like listing things. Three-way light bulbs, extension cords, screw-driver. Tonight I'm doing hardware and household items."

"And you've aged so quickly. Would you like to come back some time soon? I can't take you backwards, but I could still make some adjustments. Bring you to fullness from this point."

"Socket wrench, staple gun, varnish remover. Curtain rods. Shovel." Carol smiled bright white teeth in her wrinkled, freckled face and wandered off into the crowd.

Mac stood in pocket hands wistfully, watching the sway of frizzy orange hair departing. Her, too, he had made from the blood in his brain and the slivers in his heart. She, too, had declined fullness for early emancipation after tasting a couple of free nights.

The system had never completely worked. In a garbled but queerly effective decision, Free Nights had been granted before fullness to prevent too much refining and polishing of the new personalities. The purpose was to prevent the creation of willing slaves and drones; generally it worked, since most of the new artificial people were normal than not. For some reason, though, a few fell into the marginal category. The result was a certain small population of free crazies, harmless and productive as long as their halfwit propensities could be exercised freely on the prescribed nights and proscribed on all other nights.

The therapist leaned her chin down onto her desk and peered at him through stacks of books.

"Mac, why do all of your artificials fall into the marginal category? Not just a fractional percentage—one hundred percent. Why is that?"

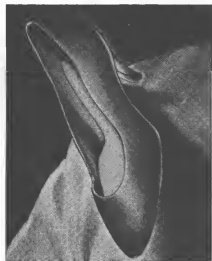
Mac smiled weakly. "I guess I'm crazy. And pass it on."

She shook her head. "That's too easy. Try again. Why do all of them fall into the marginal category?"

"I guess I have a neurotic streak or something. It keeps showing up. Maybe I indulge myself in it and—"

"That's better. Now try the truth," Mac sighed. "I like 'em a little crazy."

Across the crowded bluff and sweaty pavement, Davi Leiko leaned back against the stone blocks of a large building and crossed her naked ankles. She watched Mac without rancor or worry as he fought through a troop of Vikings in fur and horned helmets, holding shields and axes, moving down the street between slow-flowing cars. Mac kept her in his bobbing vi-



sion and skipped around a small black pickup truck with wide silver stripes.

A moment later, he hopped up on the curb and came face to face with her clear Cantonese eyes. He started to speak and then suddenly turned to look up over his shoulder, high. Very high above, in a sky of black-streaked midnight blue shone white hazily from lights below, the clock tower angled weirdly over him. It was inching toward midnight with just a minute left.

Davi Leiko looked into his eyes without rancor or worry. "What is it really?"

"I wanted you to be all you can be." Mac forced a smile and shrugged nervously.

"No, you don't. What is it really?" "I love you. I want to share my life with you."

"No, you don't. I haven't reached fullness. So I'm not really what you want—what you tried to make. I'm close, but I'm someone else. What is it really?"

"Uh ... I ... want you as you are. You're close enough."

She smiled with amusement and

raised her eyebrows. "I'm not right, but I'm good enough?"

"Well ... sorta. I mean, I said that, but it wasn't supposed to sound like that."

"What is it really?"

Far above, a long clean chime sounded from the clock tower, reverberating through the bluff and sweaty night.

Mac fidgeted anxiously. "Loneliness. Fear of loneliness. Fear of an empty future."

Davi Leiko shrugged, and another chime sounded, sending pedestrians running for cover. As they left the streets, the car traffic began to speed up. Free night was ending.

"Your future is clear enough. Your whole career is established. You create artificials. You're a professional in your field, and highly respected." Davi Leiko gave him a warm reassuring smile. Another chime sounded.

"No! I mean, that's not enough. Not what I meant. I want ... a companion. For my life."

"A companion of your own making, precisely designed to specifications?"

"Well ..." Mac smiled weakly. "When you think about it ... why not?"

Davi Leiko was still smiling, but now she was sad and disappointed. "I suppose. Why not, indeed."

Mac gazed at her face in panic, out of words to speak, out of hopes to plead, out of courage to act. Chimes rang out long and pure, chasing stragglers from the cooling, damp and steamy streets. Mac felt himself nearly alone now, standing on the sidewalk next to a naked woman in the middle of the night.

Mac Tom hinted a shrug. "Love me," he whispered.

Davi Leiko smiled with a wistful sadness that belied her modern engineered heart. "I could do that. In fact, I do love you. You made me that way. But how could it ever be enough, with you knowing I never had any choice?"

"It's enough!" Mac cried urgently, as the final twelfth chime of midnight rang out long and sweet into the night sky.

"I love you too much for that." Davi Leiko winked at him and slid into a shadow. Her mandarin red pumps flashed farewell and she vanished into a night alley.

Mac Tom rocked back on pointed boots, alone on the damp and steamy corner of sidewalk. The Aysquare night was damp and steamy in the summer darkness, lit up Free Night neon over empty streets.



MAD CITY BENEATH THE SANDS

*A nightmare long buried
lies waiting for
the day of its resurrection.*

by Richard Paul Russo

ILLUSTRATION BY BART GOLDMAN

ARMAND:

Desert below. The sky above, desert too. Hot and dry. Stones bake in the sun. No plants, no signs of animals. The breeze, just as hot as the sun.

We wait in the shade of a stand of boulders.

Around us, no other landmarks in sight. Our view is of sand, gravel, low stones. And the shimmer of heat.

No visions come.

We wait.

TORY:

There are times when I think the other two have given up, and are simply waiting for death; at other times, I sense a deceptive air in their resignation, as though they are instead waiting for an opportunity to strike. But strike at what or whom? And why? I don't know. Something is very different this time out, and I don't trust either of them.

But we are a team, we've worked together before, and always with at least some success. Enough to keep us alive.

Still, everything is off center. We've been out here ten days now, and this is my first log entry. It should be my fifth or sixth. What have I been doing?

Armand is no better. He has not yet been able to evoke a single vision.

And Shight is the worst. Though he has begun dreaming, I can sense that he has, he denies it completely; so we have no access to his dreams. Without that access we are primed for failure.

One more day, and our water will be gone.

What is happening out here?

SHIGHT:

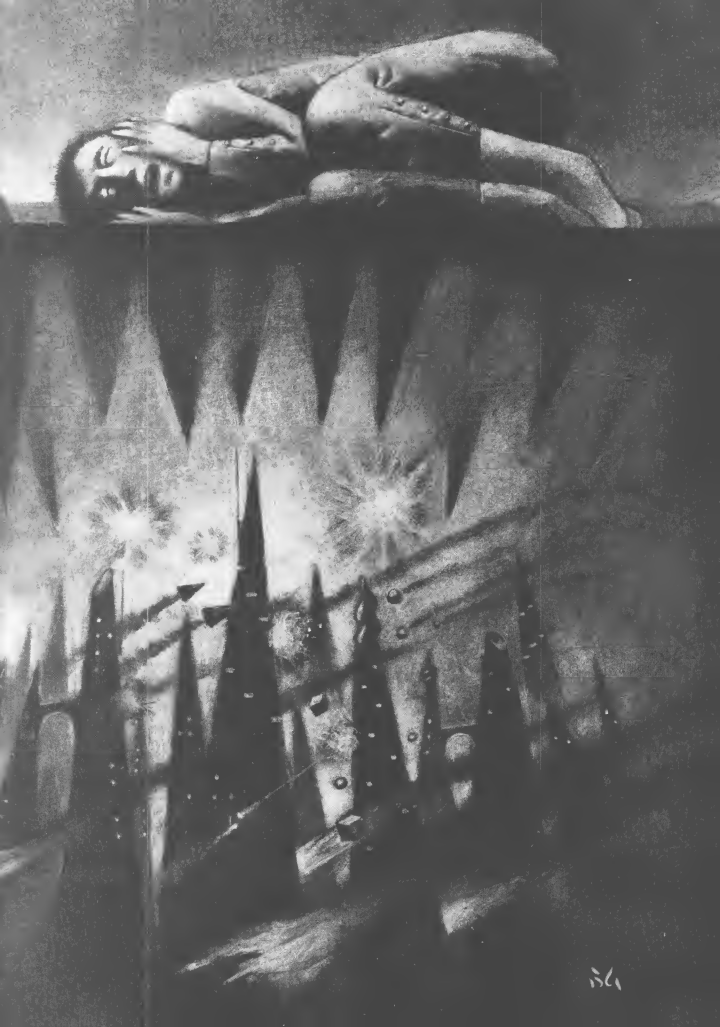
Archways, phosphor-lighted, shining over multiple air corridors, long sleek vehicles chuting through them above the ground.

Nighttime, but the city is alive; alight and brighter than day, it sends a glowing dome of light into the dark, star-studded sky. What city? A city.

Walls of stone and metal, high and thick rising from canals of water reflecting phosphor and flame and the trails of the air sleds. Windows everywhere in the walls, windows of glass swirling with color, or melting away to reveal . . .

Huge, dark gnarled heads, massive limbs and flexing appendages, gold eyes blazing from leather sockets, blazing terror . . .

It's just a dream. No, it's more, it's



MAD CITY

a truth-dream. I have to tell the others. But no, these creatures ...

One of the large, dark creatures leaps from a window, lands on one of the sleek vehicles flying past. The vehicle swerves and dips, careens to the side, now out of control. The large creature hangs on, pounds at the canopy with stone fists. Glass cracks, metal dents.

The vehicle swerves abruptly, crashes into a stone wall, scrapes along it, then plummets to the ground, the large creature still riding it. Water, stone and metal meet, loud and splintering. Stone and dust settle, the vehicle at the canal's edge. The large dark creature hammers at the canopy, finally bursts through. It reaches in, pulls out two much smaller, lightly furred beings, snaps both of their necks, then opens its mouth ...

Truth-dream. I must tell the others, I must ... No, these creatures, we'll release them, won't we, if we ... We'll fail out here if I don't, though, if I don't tell them. We'll die if we fail. But better death than ... better death.

1

The sun reached its peak, blazed down upon the stand of boulders and the three people within it. Armand, dark beard glistening with sweat, crouched in the shade of a smaller boulder, out of sight of the other two. He gazed out across the barren expanse, expression fixed as the stone around him.

The woman, Tory, spent several minutes speaking into a hand-held vocoder, then buried it in sand and gravel beneath a flat rock. She scrambled up and over stone and rock, in the direct heat and light of the sun, until she spotted Shight.

Shight lay in the shade, curled up and trembling, eyes clamped shut. Tory watched him from above, unmoving.

Suddenly Shight flailed out an arm, slapped knuckles against stone, and jerked awake.

"What is it?" Tory asked from above.

Shight jerked his head, looked at her. "Nothing," he said.

"You were dreaming."

"No."

"What were you dreaming,

Shight? You have to tell us. You want us to die?"

"Nothing," he said. "No dreams. Nothing."

Tory sighed heavily, shook her head, and turned away.

ARMAND:

Something waits below us, deep in the earth.

Not just water. More, far more.

Heat rises from the sand and rock, and something else rises from beneath that. I don't know what it is. Latent ... what? Life? Power? Visions should be frequent, more intense than usual. Instead, not one has come to

"Armand thinks Shight is actively blocking his visions. He says we have to force him to tell us his dreams. We can't wait any longer. In this heat, we'll die soon."

me. Something blocks them.

I need Shight's dreams.

TORY:

Nothing is happening. If something doesn't change soon, we'll all die.

There is water far below us, there must be. The Diviner marked it, and she's never been wrong before. In fact, she says this may be the largest reservoir she's ever found, but it won't do our people any good if it stays beneath the desert. That's what the three of us are here for—to bring the water to the surface. And yet, nothing is happening.

Times like this, I wish the Technocrats would build their damn starship and go out to the stars, rediscover those who colonized this barren world, who left us here with too many questions and not enough answers. Why don't they come back to this world? Have they all died? It doesn't really matter.

Our own water ran out this morning, and already the thirst cuts through me. The timing is all wrong. The principle is sound, and it's always worked before for us—strand the team

out in the desert above the reservoir located by the Diviner, and don't return for them until they've raised the water to the surface. The lack of water, the certainty of death, serves as the final catalyst for our combined forces. The energy, unleashed through desperation, is channeled through me, and focused, and we draw the water up, force it upward through sand and stone, bring it to the surface in a fountain, in gushing wells or exploding geysers, in free-flowing rivers flooding the desert floor ...

But ... by this time Armand's visions should be focusing our energies, narrowing them, and Shight's dreams should be shaping and modifying Armand's visions. And if I should be keeping the log, acting as bridge and equalizer, holding us all together as a unit. Instead, we are falling apart, fighting each other ... and I have no idea why.

SHIGHT:

The city again. Night of two moons. This time I am on the ground, walking between stagnant canals through deserted streets and tunnels. Archways are dark, or only partially lit, phosphor pulsing dim and sporadic. Water drips from walls on all sides, the only sound in the air.

The ground rumbles, shakes, stone cracks. A huge, black vehicle rolls out from a side tunnel, heavily plated, chewing the roadway as it moves. Sparks of green light dance across the metal surface, the metal solid and without windows. A hole melts away in the side of the vehicle, and a globe of swirling liquid squeezes out, curves upward as the hole closes behind it. The globe picks up speed, swerving from side to side as it rises, then splatters against an archway high overhead.

The stone archway begins to dissolve, shimmering with electric blue flames that spread slowly along cracks and holes. The archway collapses, slowly at first, then all at once, small and large chunks of stone raining down on the ground vehicle and bouncing off without effect.

Suddenly, a shower of tiny, bright silver-winged creatures cascades from the collapsing archway. A high-pitched whistle follows them as they dive towards the vehicle, darting in and out of the falling stone. They release tiny green droplets as they dive; the droplets strike the vehicle and burn minute holes in its armor. When the winged creatures near the vehicle, they swerve away and glide swiftly along one of the canals, just above the sur-

face of the water. A few moments later they are gone from sight.

With nothing left of the archway above but a few bits of crumbling stone, the vehicle turns and rolls on, tearing up the roadway in its wake. The green sparks continue their dance.

2

Tory and Shight slept through the heat of the day, but Armand remained awake, watching the motionless desert from a pocket of shade. He continually sharpened a long knife on a dry whetstone, not looking at it, but occasionally rubbing it against his trousers. Where he did, a tiny ridge of linted cloth was raised.

Shight had dug a burrow beneath a low, round boulder, and lay curled within it, sleeping and twitching. Tory sat with her back against a flat rock, slept with hands resting lightly on her knees. Once in a while she opened her eyes for a few moments, shifted position, licked dry lips, then closed her eyes again.

Armand stared at the knife. He touched the blade with a fingertip, drew blood. He spat on the blade, then drove it to the hilt into the sand at his feet.

He gazed out into the desert.

ARMAND:

No water today, none tomorrow. Maybe never.

Still, no visions, but now I know: Shight is blocking them. At first, I thought it was what lies beneath us, buried by the desert; that with Shight's help, with his dreams, I could break through. But Shight himself is actively blocking me. I don't even think he knows it. Then, maybe he does, and he ...

He's going to kill us all.

TORY:

Armand came and talked to me at dusk, while Shight was sleeping (and dreaming). Armand thinks Shight is actively, though perhaps subconsciously, blocking his visions. He says we can't wait any longer, we have to confront Shight, we have to force him (is that possible?) to tell us his dreams, to cease blocking Armand's visions.

Armand is right, of course. In this heat, we'll die soon. Two days, maybe three.

What is happening out here? We three have worked together five times before, and there are now three new communities developing around oases we have, in essence, created. Three new stepping stones further into the

desert, three more steps towards what we hope will be a land of rivers and open lakes and clouds above that rain fresh clean water onto the ground.

No one really knows how people like Armand, Shight, and myself came about, whether through accident or design. Most people believe there are too many too similar for it to be accident. And there have always been stories of genetic enhancement or manipulation far in our past, before our ancestors stranded us. If so, it was done with a technology we have long since lost, or never really had.

If we die out here, we won't be the first team to do so, and we won't



be the last.

But that does not mean we want to die. Except, perhaps, for Shight. But why?

SHIGHT:

No more sleep ... no more dreams, please ... no more truth-dreams, please ... no more ... no ...

Day in the city, a blazing sun reflects in dancing scales off the surface of the canals. Airspace above the canals is clear at first, then dozens of white spheres launch from windows at varying heights on both sides of the passage, trailing thick metal rope. The spheres strike the opposite walls and stick firmly, then the ropes snap taut across the canals and roadway. The large, dark, thick-limbed creatures emerge from the windows and climb out along the ropes, each walking along one rope while gripping higher ropes for support. Within minutes, twenty or twenty-five of the creatures are stationed in the network of ropes above the ground and water, stretched out along a hundred meters of the passage, and all facing the same direction.

Silence for a time. Then, the first group of cone-shaped beings appears, flying toward the network of ropes and large, dark creatures. The heads of the fliers are rust-colored cones, oval eyes circling the tips, with long serpentine tails whipping behind them. An exhaust of shiny glitter smokes out from the tails.

The cone fliers, speed increased as they near the larger creatures, swerve back and forth, up and down, trying to avoid the ropes, the dark creatures, and each other. The air becomes alive with motion: tails whipping, massive arms and legs reaching and swinging, fingers clawing, and the ropes swaying. And through it all hovers the floating silver of the smoke.

The large, dark creatures try to grab the cone fliers by the tail as they shoot past. One does, halting the cone's flight, then grabs the head with its other hand and rips it from the tail, throws both sections to the ground. A few of the cone fliers try to fly above the city walls, over the creatures and ropes, but when they do, they lose all power and plummet into the canals.

Some of the fliers aim themselves directly at the large, dark beings, who in turn shift and twist to avoid being struck. One of the creatures doesn't move quickly enough, though, and the flier swerves to strike it point first in the chest, burying itself so deep only the tail is still visible. The large creature bellows, the tail whipping back and forth from its chest, slashing at its face and arms. The creature loses its balance and falls, still screaming.

It strikes the ground between the two canals, and the screaming ceases. The body twitches, dark fluid oozing from the back of its skull, and the tail continues to whip above, less frantically now. Nearby, a section of stone paving slides back, and a huge metal appendage emerges from the opening in the ground. It reaches towards the body, and several large, barbed spikes click out, like metal fingers. The spikes come down on the body, the barbs are set, then the appendage pulls back into the opening, dragging the body with it. When all is back inside and below ground, the stone slides back, and the opening is gone.

Above, the survivors of the first flock have passed through, a new flock of the cone fliers appears, and the fighting continues. Another of the large creatures falls towards the earth, a whipping tail protruding from its belly, and plunges into the canal, splashing water up towards the blazing

MAD CITY

sun.

3

Night on the desert, and only one of the moons was visible. Shight crouched with his back against a stone, staring at the other two who stood in front of him. Their lips were chapped, cracked, faces were dusted with sand. Armand held the knife at his side, blade unsheathed and tapping at his thigh.

"You've been dreaming," Tory said. "Truth dreams."

"No," Shight said. "No ..." He shook his head several times, then nodded once. "All right, yes, yes! But don't ask me, I can't tell them to you, we can't bring up the water here, we'll have to go somewhere else."

"Shight, what are you talking about? We can't go anywhere else. We have to bring up water. None of us will last much longer. Shight, we need your dreams."

He shook his head again. "No." He covered his face with both hands, spoke through his fingers. "There's a city below us, a mad city, that's where the water is, in ... in ... I can't tell you. An alien city, an ancient mad city filled with monstrous creatures and horrible machines, all mad, violently mad. A city of chaos and destruction." He took his hands away from his face and his fingers fluttered, clutched at his trousers.

Tory knelt in front of the trembling man, glanced at Armand. Armand said nothing, and Tory turned back to Shight. "Shight, we only want to bring up the water. If there's a city below us, we won't disturb it. All we need is the water."

"No, no, we do that we'll reawaken the machines, revitalize those horrible monsters ..."

"We can't bring the dead back to life. We can't power dead, rusted machines."

Shight wrapped his arms tightly about himself, and shuddered. "I don't know, I don't understand, I just know that somehow we'll reawaken the city, we'll release the madness, the violence and destruction, we'll let all that loose, bring it upon our people. The machines and alien creatures will go mad, and they'll set out over the

desert, they'll find our people, and they'll start killing them, mindlessly killing ..."

Tory slapped him hard across the cheek, silencing him. "Damn it, Shight, you're the one who's mad." She sighed heavily. "Talking to a madman. We'll die without water, Shight. All three of us. You must give us your dreams. You must stop blocking Armand's visions. We'll die."

Shight rocked against the stone, clutching himself. "Better to die ..." he whispered. "Far better to die ... to ... the mad city ... the dead, mad city ..."

Armand quickly stepped forward,

"There's a city below us, an alien city filled with monstrous creatures and horrible machines, all violently mad, a city of chaos and destruction."

thrust out the knife, and drew it sharply across Shight's cheek and jaw. Shight cried out, and blood welled in a long curved line. He scrambled away, whimpering, holding his cheek.

Tory grabbed Armand's arm, positioned herself between the two men. Armand struggled for a brief moment, then stopped. His face went slack, and he dropped the knife.

"It's coming," he said. "At last, it's coming ..." He dropped to his knees, staring out past Tory and Shight and into the desert, and began to murmur.

ARMAND:

White on white. Heart of a white sun.

Water. Crystals and ice, blue and white. Mirrors, knives of liquid glass, liquid crystal. Sparks of ice and liquid flame.

Lines ... straight, parallel lines. Dark ridges crusted with ice, laced with ... moss? More mirrors, small and faceted and endless, suns and moons of reflection.

Cold everywhere, wet cold, moving ice between lines and ridges, into black holes, wells of darkness, pools of darkness and rough cold stone.

Water. Water dripping.

Stone water, water in stones. Cold and deep and still beneath, beneath, beneath.... Stone upon stone upon stone ...

The white sun again. Leaping shadows, curved water, flashes of metal and glass and threads of sparkling light.

Water here ... water ... lines and tunnels, joined to ... flow upward, rise through sand, percolate in the desert ...

Pain rises. Give it the ... pain.

Yes, there, draw the pain, the pain and the water and the lines of light and black fire ...

TORY:

The desert rumbles beneath our feet.

Armand is asleep, worn out from the vision and my first attempt at pulling up the water. Shight is curled up in a ball, rocking back and forth, eyes closed, mouth babbling.

We still have no water, and we're all much weaker. My throat feels full of sand. But we're closer, I think.

Armand's first vision came, finally, strong and vivid. An image of sparkling streams of water appeared in the air just above the sand in front of us. I could not understand a word of Armand's murmuring, but the water images, chaotic at first, began to form into regular, stone-lined canals carving through high stone walls. When that happened, Shight cried out, tried to attack Armand, and I had to hit him twice before he stopped. I knew then that Armand's vision was striking true, and I pulled it from him. I hit Shight a third time, to break his resistance, stunned him so I could pull the forces from him, mix them with the power of Armand's vision, then drilled all that power deep into the heart of the desert.

Too much too fast, out of desperation, and I blacked out. When I came to, the desert floor was vibrating beneath us, like a monstrous machine, and Shight was pounding on the sand, screaming at it.

Madness.

Isn't it?

I wonder what causes the vibrations, and think about Shight and his resurrected city. Could he be right?

But when Armand awakens, if we can just get one more vision from him. I think we can draw the water to the surface. There is so much water below us ... We have to do it. We won't have time for more than one shot

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THE TWILIGHT ZONE GALLERY

THE ART OF JIM BURNS

It's a sensual, organic, sometimes decadent world where bodies and machines conjoin. Hot, sleek, gleaming shapes in eye-jamming colors might be starcraft, or leather-clad flesh, bristling with arcane weaponry.

It's the world envisioned, and painted, by Jim Burns, a young British artist whose influence on our image of the future is only now being fully appreciated.

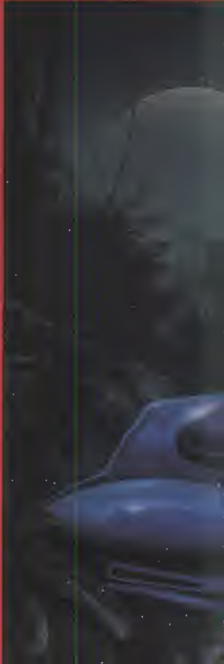
Still in his thirties, Burns began painting right out of art school in the mid-1970s. His earliest published works—advertisements, posters, pin-ups—already show the ingenuity and virtuosity that have become the hallmarks of his work. His paintings for British science fiction paperbacks soon attracted the attention of American publishers, who assigned him to illustrate the work of the field's most popular writers—Harry Harrison, Piers Anthony, Robert Silverberg, and David

Brin among them.

Silverberg, who specifically requested Burns as artist for the U.S. editions of his novels, calls him "marvelously inventive," saying: "His work satisfies me on every level, from the glistening surfaces down into the mysterious, revelatory depths."

Lightship, a recent full-color collection of Burns's art, vividly displays the recurrent images that make up his distinctive vision: Seductively beautiful women and handsome, swaggering heroes in outrageous freeform garb. High-gloss dream machines that obey their own fantastic aerodynamics. Superreal animals with sentient eyes, and terrifyingly plausible alien beings. Eerily-colored landscapes of almost unimaginable depth and detail. It's a style Burns calls "technological Baroque"—the sinuous curves of Art Nouveau pushed into a far-future setting.

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Left: *STAR FRONTIERS*
(Imagine Magazine, 1984)

Right: *STARTIDE RISING*
(Bantam Books, 1983)

Below: *THE LOVERS*
(Corgi Books, 1981)
THE JEHOVAH CONTRACT
(Franklin Watts, 1987)

Below, left: *THE BEST OF*
ARTHUR C. CLARKE
1956-72
(Sphere Books, 1981)



ON FILM



INNERSPACE:
*Martin Short shrinks from
microminiaturization device in the
new Spielberg-produced comedy.*

SPECIAL PREVIEW

LOST BOYS

Recipe for a Summer Sleeper

What's the recipe for a sleeper hit? Well, you might start out with vampires. They're always good for drawing in die-hard, horror film buffs. Some of us just can't get through a day without a heaping helping of the Undead. Add to the mix: the man who made last season's hit, *Lethal Weapon* (Richard Donner), and the director of the "brat-pack" drama, *St. Elmo's Fire* (Joel Schumacher).

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It's an amazing story. Director/producer Steven Spielberg, whose company, Amblin Entertainment, has just completed production of Joe Dante's *Innerspace*, has been making feature films for almost fifteen years. Longer, if you count his twenty-four-minute short, *Amblin* (1969), which was shown at the Atlantic Film Festival. And even longer, if you also count the eight and sixteen millimeter movies he made as a boy growing up in suburban Cincinnati and later as a student in the film department of California State College.

The point is that at the relatively youthful age of thirty-nine, Steven Spielberg—who's made four of the top ten highest-grossing motion pictures in film history (*Jaws*, *Close Encounters, E.T.*, and *Raiders of the Lost Ark*) and who recently received the prestigious Irving Thalberg award from the Motion Picture Academy of Arts and Sciences—is the most influential filmmaker in the country. He has his own production company. He is imitated—sometimes slavishly—by young filmmakers, and he's developed his own trademark, a trademark that's apparent not only on the films he directs, but also on the ones that have the Amblin imprimatur, including Joe Dante's *Gremlins*, Richard Donner's *The Goonies*, Robert Zemeckis's *Back to the Future*, and Barry Levinson's *Young Sherlock Holmes*.

It might seem premature to start talking about the "Spielberg touch." But it's not. A Steven Spielberg production bears certain unmistakable marks, like a medieval illuminator's tell-tale curlicues. But what is the Spielberg touch? To his fans, it's pure magic. To filmmakers like Joe Dante, who's currently in post-production on *Innerspace*, the Spielberg touch is not a "touch" at all. It's more like a "hands off."

Innerspace, which was written by Chip Proser and Jeffrey Boam and is slated for release this summer, is one of those "action-comedy-adventure" hybrids (a trend started by *Raiders*, *Gremlins*, and *Ghostbusters* and perhaps carried to extremes in movies like *The Goonies*, and *Young Sherlock Holmes*). Starring *Saturday Night Live* veteran Martin Short (*The Three Amigos*), and Dennis Quaid (*The Right Stuff*), *Innerspace* tells the story of what happens when a mild-mannered supermarket clerk named Jack Putter (Short) becomes possessed by Lt. Tuck Pendleton (Quaid), a hard-drinking, two-fisted "military misfit."

THE SPIELBERG TOUCH

Joe Dante and Michael Finnell, director and producer of *Innerspace*, talk about their mentor's knack for box-office magic.

By James Verniere

SPIELBERG: King of the "Killer B's."



How this case of possession is accomplished will come as no surprise to genre film fans. As in Richard Fleischer's *Fantastic Voyage* (1966), Lt. Pendleton possesses Putter via the latter's bloodstream. That's right, it's one of those miniaturization films: Pendleton and an experimental craft called the Kraken II (get it?) Submersible Pod are miniaturized in a top secret process developed in Silicon Valley.

What follows when the lieutenant is mistakenly injected into the body of Jack Putter is a combination of mad-cap hijinx—involving industrial spies and car chases—and a microbe's view of the body of one very confused human. At least in synopsis form, *Innerspace* sounds very much like sort of a high-tech *Topper*, complete with state of the art special effects from Industrial Light and Magic.

The film started life at Universal, where Dante had first seen the original



DANTE AND FINNELL: Spielberg's Amblin gave them room to explore *Innerspace*.

script by Chip Proser. A year and a half later, while at Warner Bros., Dante read a new version, re-written by "script doctor," Jeffrey Boam (*The Dead Zone*), and he was hooked. "It just won me over, even though I had more or less written it off," he said. Dante does not object to comparisons between *Innerspace* and *Fantastic Voyage*, but he's quick to point out that his film is more of a role-switching comedy, more in the style of *Trading Places*, *All of Me*, or *Peggy Sue Got Married*.

"In fact, the screenwriter, Jeff Boam, told me he had pretty much patterned it on the old Lewis and Martin pictures. What would it be like to shrink Dean Martin and put him inside Jerry Lewis to tell him what to do?" said Dante.

What makes this a Spielberg production? Well, for one it's directed by Dante, whose association with Spielberg began when the latter became a fan of *The Howling*. Dante has made movies for other people. His first film, *Hollywood Boulevard* (1976), which he co-directed with Allan Arkush, and his second film, *Piranha* (1978), were made at New World Pictures for B-movie master, Roger Corman.

The Howling (1981), which was released by Avco Embassy, was financed independently, and *Explorers* (1985), Dante's only box office flop, was made for Paramount Pictures. Clearly, Dante's association with Spielberg has been his most fruitful one. In 1983, he directed the "It's a Good Life" episode of *Ti-*

light Zone—The Movie. He went on to make the box office smash, *Gremlins*, in 1984. And he has directed two episodes for Spielberg's television series, *Amazing Stories* ("Boo!" and "The Greeble"). (Dante also recently completed an episode for a comedy anthology for John Landis, but that film, *Amazon Women on the Moon*, has yet to find a distributor.)

"Amblin tries to be what [Coppola's] Zoetrope wanted to be but never really managed to be," explained Dante in response to a question about the appeal of working for Spielberg. "There's an atmosphere of creativity, and a feeling that people are allowed to make the movies they want to make."

Actually, Spielberg's style may most resemble that of B-movie master, Roger Corman. For example, when *Jaws* (1975), Spielberg's first blockbuster was released, New York Times film critic Vincent Canby remarked, "What is *Jaws* except a big-budget Roger Corman movie?" It's a point well taken. Like Corman, Spielberg has a penchant for genre films, especially science fiction and horror films, and like Corman, Spielberg has become well-known for "cultivating" new talent, including directors like Dante, Zemeckis, Levinson, and George Miller (*Road Warrior*).

"When I worked for Roger Corman," said Dante, who started work for New World as a trailer cutter, "it was somewhat similar because there was one guy that you reported to. If he disagreed with you, you knew

where you stood. When you work with a studio, sometimes you work with many different people who often have conflicting opinions. The nice thing about Amblin is that Spielberg serves as a buffer between you and the studio, and the studio people will defer to him, so you only have to please one person instead of many people. Let's face it. A picture like *Gremlins* could never have been made for a studio unless there was someone in charge who could say, 'Let this guy make his movie.'"

But the tie that binds Corman and Spielberg is even more evident in the nature of their films. Corman, the man who practically invented the post-World War II, American B movie, has said that he got out of the B movie business because Hollywood had "invaded the territory." What he meant is that the "high concept" film, a staple of today's film industry, is really just a Corman movie with a big budget.



CORMAN: "B Movie" Maker Mentor.

"But Steven Spielberg has elevated B movies. Now they're mainstream films," said *Innerspace* producer, Michael Finnell (*The Howling*, *Gremlins*, *Explorers*). "His films have a sophistication and a literate quality that was lacking in Rogers." Finnell, who first met Joe Dante when the two worked together on *Hollywood Boulevard*, and is currently Dante's partner in their company, Renfield Productions, does not agree that there is pressure at Amblin to make pictures that will be rated PG-13. "It's not that there's pressure. The fact is that those are the films that appeal to Steven, so those are the ones he makes."

Dante, however, sees it differently. "Going into any deal there's usually a stipulation that your picture will get a certain rating, and you have to adhere

to that. Needless to say, at Amblin, the R rating is not popular. When a film says, "Steven Spielberg presents," there's a tacit understanding that it's similar to the old, "Walt Disney presents." And I think that Steven takes that responsibility not lightly. But it's a restriction I don't mind working with because with most of my films, it's endemic to the project. *Innerspace*, for example, is a PG-13 kind of movie. *Gremlins* was a very controversial film, and may have been responsible for getting the PG-13 rating created. But it was still within the confines of what was understood to be a family movie."

So the Spielberg touch is really the Disney touch updated? I don't think it's as simple as that. Walt Disney, for example, probably thought Roger Corman's movies were trash, and in fact Corman's films were often subversive (young people rebelling against authority), as well as being cheap and sensational. Sure, it was part of the Corman marketing strategy to draw teenagers into the theaters. But he was appealing to that segment of the audience that had been alienated by the Disney view of the world, a view that made the Disney name box-office poison in the sixties and seventies (so much so that a new name had to be created for Disney's primary film division: Touchstone). In fact, that audience (the adolescents) has now been won over by Spielberg.

In the final analysis, the Spielberg touch (like the Disney touch) is really the Midas touch. These men are not necessarily legends in the film industry because they're the best or the most innovative. They're famous because their movies make money, lots of it. Spielberg productions, like *Innerspace*, are expected to be blockbusters, and that kind of pressure may be the most insidious.

"The most restricting thing about making movies in general," says Dante, "is that what you make has to be so successful that it will justify the incredible amount of money it costs to make any movie. So your film has to appeal to the greatest number of people, which usually means that you can't afford to offend a whole lot of them."

On the other hand, of course, what was most fun about *Gremlins* was that Dante—like Spielberg before him in films like *Jaws* and *Raiders*—managed somehow to "stretch the envelope" of the family picture and still make family audiences howl with delight. With any luck, he'll do the same in *Innerspace*, and Steven Spielberg will remain the man with the Midas touch. ■

LOST BOYS

(continued from page 54)



Now, blend thoroughly with a clever screenplay about a roving band of California teenagers who have something deadlier on their minds than shopping malls and surf boards.

Wait a minute. There's something missing: a title. When you're smart enough to call the final product *The Lost Boys*, you've really got the makings of an old-fashioned, box office sleeper.

The Lost Boys, a Warner Bros. film produced by Richard Donner and Harvey Bernhard (the director-producer team that brought us *The Omen* and *The Goonies*), sounds—on paper—like the perfect combination of *Peter Pan*, *Dracula*, and *Rebel Without a Cause*. Based on a screenplay by Janice Fischer, James Jeremias, and Jeffrey Boam, *The Lost Boys* features a cast of young actors, including Kiefer Sutherland (*Stand By Me*) and Jami Gertz (*Solarbabies*), and it offers a new twist on the theme of peer pressure.

What do you do if the coolest guys in your neighborhood are vampires? It's a question young audiences might very well be dying to sink their teeth into this summer.

Although one might be tempted to deride a film as seemingly contrived as this one by calling it *Bloodsucking Bratpackers* or *The Invasion of the MTV Vampires*, *The Lost Boys* sounds like it might also be a neat social allegory (sort of a pop/horror version of Penelope Spheeris's *Suburbia*), as well as a comic coming of age film.

"It's a strange blend," agreed screenwriter Jeffrey Boam in a recent interview. Boam, who earned an M.A. in

Theater Arts at UCLA and whose previous credits include *Straight Time* (1978) and *The Dead Zone* (1983), did not originate the script. But he was called in to make it work. "I've become the court of last resort," joked Boam, who's known in the film industry as a "Mr. Fixit" and who most recently rewrote the script for Joe Dante's *Innerspace*.

"This story was full of potential," said Boam. "But it just wasn't there. It was much more innocent and child-like in its original form, and the 'lost boys' themselves were really boys. They were just kids. They weren't blood-sucking creatures of the night. The story had a Disney-esque quality."

In addition to a re-write that turned the "boys" into teenagers and brought out the horrific elements in the script, *The Lost Boys* also went through a few directors. Richard Donner (*Superman II*, *The Goonies*) was originally slated to direct the film himself, but he went on to make *Lethal Weapon* instead. The film was then handed over to Richard Franklin (*Psycho II*). But it ended up in the hands of Joel Schumacher, whose previous film, *St. Elmo's Fire*, was the first "bratpack" blockbuster.

So *The Lost Boys* not only has the earmarks of a sleeper, it's also got an interesting pedigree. In fact, eagle-eyed viewers might have noticed a theater marquee in *Lethal Weapon*, which read: "The Lost Boys This Summer's Smash Hit." Now, if life really does imitate art....

—James Verniere

JIM BURNS

(continued from page 53)



Above: Jim Burns in his studio

Left: Production drawing for *BLADERUNNER* (Warner Brothers, 1980)

Burns's first true masterpiece (in the sense of a single ambitious work that proves one a master at his craft) was the full-color graphic novel *Planet Story* (1977) developed in collaboration with author Harry Harrison. A rollicking, lavishly-illustrated tour through a seedy high-tech future crammed with giant lizards, cyborgs, jackbooted villains and bizarre contrivances striving for life, *Planet Story* gave Burns free rein to develop his visual vocabulary.

It's startling to see how contemporary those images from a decade ago still seem. In part, it's because Burns is a genuine original; one of the few artists who can literally put the viewer into an alternate reality.

But it's also arguable that Burns's images played a significant part in shaping the "look" of the eighties. Consider: Burns's covers have been among the freshest visual ideas in science fiction for nearly fifteen years. And the nasty, hardedged "New Wave" aesthetic that swept into music and art at the turn of the decade owes much to science fiction art.

Unlike many of his colleagues, Burns carefully reads the work he illustrates, often incorporating the most audacious literary images he encounters into his paintings.

But there's more to it. The most talented younger writers working today are visually hip, post-cinematic. Burns's images, along with those of artists like Syd Mead, H.R. Giger, Ron Cobb, and Roger Dean, were part of the matrix of science fiction for the writers who came to maturity in the eighties. It's probable that many of these writers are now drawing some of their imagery from Burns.

It's also likely that filmmakers like George Miller (*Mad Max*, *Road Warrior*), David Lynch (*Eraserhead*, *Dune*), and Ridley Scott (*Alien*, *Bladerunner*) were familiar with Burns's work when they created their broke-down engines and dead-end futures. In fact, Ridley Scott turned to Burns for designs of futuristic vehicles when he was adapting Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* into the film *Bladerunner*. From there it's a quick step through rock videos and back to the street.

It might be surprising to discover that an artist who employs such avant garde subject matter is a family man with a stable home life and four growing children. But Jim Burns shrugs off such contradictions. He is a man of methodical work habits, painstakingly collecting visual stock of people, animals, buildings, and machines, and

rendering them in acrylics layer by layer, using both airbrush and paintbrush. He is not as prolific as some of his contemporaries, since he labors over each canvas to include the minute detail and technical precision which gives his work its visual authority.

Recently, he's begun working in another mode—a misty, turbulent, moody style best exemplified by his covers for T.E.D. Klein's *The Ceremonies* and *Dark Gods*, and for Robert Silverberg's *The Book of Skulls*. Here the subject matter is the natural world, the present and even the past—ruined temples, desolate farmhouses, bare, withered trees and storm-filled skies. The style gives a new feeling to the novel of terror, as fresh as his science fictional work.

By looking beyond the conventional, pulp-art solutions to sf and fantasy themes, Burns creates paintings which stand on their own as art, just as the best of science fiction stands on its own as literature.

"To try and push the boundaries of sf imagery out into these boarder areas," says Burns, "is to do no more than follow the very healthy tendency of the literary form to explore more rewarding and 'serious' avenues than it has in the past."

—TK



*Top: War Wolves from
PLANET STORY
(Pierrot Publishing, 1979)*

*Above: THE BOOK
OF SKULLS
(Bantam Books, 1982)*

*Left: MORTAL GODS
(Panther Books, 1980)*





DELTA SLY HONEY

*At night the ghost patrols
move through the haze of battle smoke
along the Napalm Coast.*

by Lucius Shepard

ILLUSTRATION BY ROBERT WISNEWSKI

There was this guy I knew at Noc Linh, worked the corpse detail, guy name of Randall J. Willingham, a skinny red-haired Southern boy with a plague of freckles and eyes blue as poker chips, and sometimes when he got high, he'd wander up to the operations bunker and start spouting all kinds of shit over the radio, telling about his hometown and his dog, his opinion of the war (he was against it), and what it was like making love to his girlfriend, talking real pretty and wistful about her ways, the things she'd whisper and how she'd draw her knees up tight to her chest to let him go in deep. There was something pure and peaceful in his voice, his phrasing, and listening to him, you could feel the war draining out of you and soon you'd be remembering your own girl, your own dog and hometown, not with heartsick longing but with joy in knowing you'd had at least that much sweetness of life. For many of us, his voice came to be the oracle of our luck, our survival, and even the brass who tried to stop his broadcasts finally realized he was doing a damn sight more good than any morale officer, and it got to where anytime the war was going slow and there was some free air, they'd call Randall up and ask if he felt in the mood to do a little talking.

The funny thing was that except

for when he had a mike in his hand, you could hardly drag a word out of Randall. He had been a loner from day one of his tour, limiting his conversation to "Hey" and "How you?" and such, and his celebrity status caused him to become even less talkative. This was best explained by what he told us once over the air: "You meet ol' Randall J. on the street, and you gonna say, 'Why that can't be Randall J.!' That dumb-lookin' hillbilly couldn't recite the swearin'-in-oath, let alone be the hottest damn radio personality in South Vietnam!" And you'd be right on the money, 'cause Randall J. don't go more'n double figures for IQ, and he ain't got the imagination of a stump, and if you stopped him to say 'Howdy,' chances are he'd be stuck for a response. But lemme tell ya, when he puts his voice into a mike, ol' Randall J. becomes one with the airwaves, and the light that's been dark inside him goes bright, and his spirit streams out along Thunder Road and past the Napalm Coast, mixin' with the ozone and changin' into Randall J. Willingham, the High Priest of the Soulful Truth and the Holy Ghost of the Sixty-Cycle Hum."

The base was situated on a gently inclined hill set among other hills, all

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DELTA

of which had once been part of the Michelin rubber plantation, but now were almost completely defoliated, transformed into dusty brown lumps. Nearly seven thousand men were stationed there, living in bunkers and tents dotting the slopes, and the only building with any degree of permanence was an outsized Quonset hut that housed the PX: it stood just inside the wire at the base of the hill. I was part of the MP contingent, and I guess I was the closest thing Randall had to a friend. We weren't really tight, but being from a small Southern town myself, the son of gentry, I was familiar with his type—fey, quiet farmboys whose vulnerabilities run deep—and I felt both sympathy and responsibility for him. My sympathy wasn't misplaced: nobody could have had a worse job, especially when you took into account the fact that his top sergeant, a beady-eyed brush-cut, tackle-sized Army lifer named Andrew Moon, had chosen him for his whipping boy. Every morning I'd pass the tin-roofed shed where the corpses were off-loaded (it, too, was just inside the wire, but on the opposite side of the hill from the PX), and there Randall would be, laboring among body bags that were piled around like huge black fruit, with Moon hovering in the background and scowling. I always made it a point to stop and talk to Randall in order to give him a break from Moon's tyranny, and though he never expressed his gratitude or said very much about anything, soon he began to call me by my Christian name, Curt, instead of by my rank. Each time I made to leave, I would see the strain come back into his face, and before I had gone beyond earshot, I would hear Moon reviling him. I believe it was those days of staring into stomach cavities, into charred hearts and brains, and Moon all the while screaming at him ... I believe that was what had squeezed the poetry out of Randall and birthed his radio soul.

I tried to get Moon to lighten up. One afternoon I bearded him in his tent and asked why he was mistreating Randall. Of course I knew the answer. Men like Moon, men who have secured a little power and grown bloated from its use, they don't need

an excuse for brutality; there's so much meanness inside them, it's bound to slop over onto somebody. But—thinking I could handle him better than Randall—I planned to divert his meanness, set myself up as his target, and this seemed a good way to open.

He didn't bite, however; he just lay on his cot, squinting up at me and nodding sagely, as if he saw through my charade. His jowls were speckled with a few day's growth of stubble, hairs sparse and black as pig bristles. "Y'know," he said, "I couldn't figure why you were buddyin' up to that fool, so I had a look at your records."

Randall always signed off his broadcast in the same fashion, trying to contact the patrols of ghosts he claimed were haunting the free-fire zones.

He grunted laughter "Now I got it."

"Oh?" I said, maintaining my cool.

"You got quite a heritage, son! All that noble Southern blood, all them dead generals and senators. When I see that. I said to myself, 'Don't get on this boy's case too heavy, Andy. He's just tryin' to be like his great-granddaddy, doin' a kindness now and then for the darkies and the poor white trash.' Ain't that right?"

I couldn't deny that a shadow of the truth attached to what he said, but I refused to let him rattle me. "My motives aren't in question here," I told him.

"Well, neither are mine ... 'least not by anyone who counts." He swung his legs off the cot and sat up, glowering at me. "You got some nice duty here, son. But you go fuckin' with me, I'll have your ass walkin' point in Quanh Tri 'fore you can blink. Understand?"

I felt as if I had been dipped in ice water. I knew he could do as he threatened—any man who's made top sergeant has also made some powerful friends—and I wanted no part of Quanh Tri.

He saw my fear and laughed. "Go on, get out!" he said, and I stepped through the door, he added, "Come round the shed anytime son. I ain't got nothin' against *noblesse oblige*. Fact is, I love to watch."

And I walked away, knowing that Randall was lost.

In retrospect, it's clear that Randall had broken under Moon's whip early on, that his drifts radio spiels were symptomatic of his dissolution. In another time and place, someone might have noticed his condition; but in Vietnam everything he did seemed a normal reaction to the craziness of the war, perhaps even a bit more restrained than normal, and we would have thought him really nuts if he hadn't acted weird. As it was, we considered him a flake, but not wrapped so tight that you couldn't poke fun at him, and I believe it was this misconception that brought matters to a head....

Yet I'm not absolutely certain of that.

Several nights after my talk with Moon, I was on duty in the operations bunker when Randall did his broadcast. He always signed off in the same distinctive fashion, trying to contact the patrols of ghosts he claimed were haunting the free-fire zones. Instead of using ordinary call signs like Charlie Baker Able, he would invent others that suited the country lyricism of his style, names such as Lobo Angel Silver and Prairie Dawn Omega.

"Delta Sly Honey," he said that night. "Do you read? Over."

He sat a moment, listening to static filling in from nowhere.

"I know you're out there, Delta Sly Honey," he went on. "I can see you clear, walkin' the high country near Black Virgin Mountain, movin' through twists of fog like battle smoke and feelin' a little afraid, 'cause though you gone from the world, there's a world of fear 'tween here and the hereafter. Come back at me, Delta Sly Honey, and tell me how it's goin'." He stopped sending for a bit, and when he received no reply, he spoke again. "Maybe you don't think I'd understand your troubles, brothers. But I truly do. I know your hopes and fears, and how the spell of too much poison and fire and flyin' steel warped the chemistry of fate and made you wander off into the wars of the spirit 'stead of findin' rest beyond the grave. My soul's trackin' you as you move higher and higher toward the peace at the end of everything, passin' through mortar bursts throwin' up thick gouts of

silence, with angels like tracers leadin' you on, listenin' to the cold white song of incoming stars.... Come on back at me, Delta Sly Honey. This here's your good buddy Randall J., earth-bound at Loc Linh. Do you read?"

There was a wild burst of static, and then a voice answered, saying, "Randall J., Randall J.! This is Delta Sly Honey. Readin' you loud and clear."

I let out a laugh, and the officers sitting at the far end of the bunker turned their heads, grinning. But Randall stared in horror at the radio, as if it were leaking blood, not static. He thumbed the switch and said shakily, "What's your position, Delta Sly Honey? I repeat. What's your position?"

"Guess you might say out position's kinda relative," came the reply. "But far as you're concerned, mar, we just down the road. There's a place for you with us, Randall J. We waitin' for you."

Randall's Adam's apple worked, and he wetted his lips. Under the hot bunker lights, his freckles stood out sharply.

"Y'know how it is when you're pinned down by fire?" the voice continued. "Lyin' flat with the flow of bullets passin' inches over your head? And you start thinkin' how easy it'd be just to raise up and get it over with.... you ever feel like that, Randall J.? Most times you keep flat, 'cause things ain't bad enough to make you go that route. But the way things been goin' for you, man, what with the stickin' your hands into dead meat night and day—"

"Shut up," said Randall, his voice tight and small.

"—and that asshole Moon fuckin' with your mind, maybe it's time to consider your options."

"Shut up!" Randall screamed it, and I grabbed him by the shoulders.

"Take it easy," I told him. "It's just some jerk-off puttin' you on." He shook me off; the vein in his temple was throbbing.

"I ain't trying to mess with you, man," said the voice. "I'm just layin' it out, showin' you there ain't no real options here. I know all them crazy thoughts that been flapin' round in your head, and I know how hard you been tryin' to control 'em. Ain't no point in controllin' 'em any more, Randall J. You belong to us now. All you gotta do is to take a little walk down the road, and we be waitin'. We got some serious humpin' ahead of us, man. Out past the Napalm Coast, up beyond the high country...."

Randall bolted for the door, and I caught him and spun him around. He was breathing rapidly through his mouth, and his eyes seemed to be shining too brightly—like the way an old light bulb will flare up right before it goes dark for good. "Lemme go!" he said. "I gotta find 'em! I gotta tell 'em it ain't my time!"

"It's just someone playin' a goddamn-joke," I said, and then it dawned on me. "It's Moon, Randall! you know it's him puttin' somebody up to this."

"I gotta find 'em!" he repeated, and with more strength than I would have given him credit for, he pushed me away and ran off into the dark.



He didn't return, not that night, not the next morning, and we reported him AWOL. We searched the base and the nearby villes to no avail, and since the countryside was rife with NLF patrols and VC, it was logical to assume he had been killed or captured. Over the next couple of days, Moon made frequent public denials of his complicity in the joke, but no one bought it. He took to walking around with his holster unlatched, a wary expression on his face. Though Randall hadn't had any real friends, many of us had been devoted to his broadcasts, and among those devotees were a number of men who... well, a civilian psychiatrist might have called them unstable, but in truth they were men who had chosen to exalt instability, to ritualize insanity as a means of maintaining their equilibrium in an unstable medium: it was likely some of them would attempt reprisals. Moon's best hope was that something would divert their attention, but three days after Randall's disappearance, a peculiar transmission came into operations; like all Randall's broadcasts, it was piped over the PA, and thus Moon's fate was sealed.

"Howdy, Noc Linh," said Randall or someone who sounded identical to him. "This here's Randall J. Willingham on patrol with Delta Sly Honey, speakin' to you from beyond the Napalm Coast. We been humpin' through rain and fog most of the day, with no sign of the enemy, just a few demons twistin' up from the gray and fadin' when we come near, and now we all hunkered down by the radio, restin' for tomorrow. Y'know, brothers, I used to be scared shitless of wakin' up here in the big nothin', but now it's gone and happened, I'm findin' it ain't so bad. 'Least I got the feelin' I'm headed someplace, whereas back at Noc Linh I was just spinnin' round and round, and close to losin' my mind. I hated ol' Sergeant Moon, and I hated him worse after he put someone up to hasslin' me on the radio. But now, though I reckon he's still pretty hateful, I can see he was actin' under the influence of a higher agency, one who was tryin' to help me get clear of Noc Linh... which was somethin' that had to be, no matter if I had to die to do it. Seems to me that's the nature of war, that all the violence has the effect of lettin' a little magic seep into the world by way of compensation...."

To most of us, this broadcast signaled that Randall was alive, but we also knew what it portended for Moon. And therefore I wasn't terribly surprised when he summoned me to his tent the next morning. At first he tried to play sergeant, ordering me to ally myself with him; but seeing that this didn't work, he begged for my help. He was a mess: red-eyed, unshaven, an eyelid twitching.

"I can't do a thing," I told him.

"You're his friend!" he said. "If you tell 'em I didn't have nothin' to do with it, they'll believe you."

"The hell they will! They'll think I helped you." I studied him a second, enjoying his anxiety. "Who did help you?"

"I didn't do it, goddammit!" His voice had risen to a shout, and he had to struggle to keep calm. "I swear! It wasn't me!"

It was strange, my mental set at that moment. I found I believed him—I didn't think him capable of manufacturing sincerity—and yet I suddenly believed everything: that Randall was somehow dead and alive, that Delta Sly Honey both did and did not exist, that whatever was happening was an event in which all possibility was manifest, in which truth and falsity had the same valence, in which the

(continued on page 84)

THE CUTLEFISH

*Sometimes understanding is possible
even without a common language.*

by A.R. Morlan

ILLUSTRATIONS BY DAVID DIRCKS

Timmy rolled his wheeled janitors' bucket and mop stand in front of Dr. Curwen's office door, and gently pressed a fingertip to each letter of the doctor's last name. Daddy had told him not to bother with the first two letters of the long names on each plaque attached to the blond wood doors—explaining to Timmy that the first two fingers in each doctor's name wasn't actually a part of his or her *real* name.

"Then why they got it there, Daddy?" Timmy asked, semi-chewed peas falling out of his mouth, and Daddy said, "It's like a 'Mr.' or 'Miss,' or 'Ms.,' or 'Mrs.' All grown-ups get them, but it isn't an actual *part* of their name. It's a title ... like your title is Mr. Timothy Lange, Third Floor Janitor at the Marine Research Labs. But your *name* is just Timothy—" "Timmy, Daddy." "Okay, son, Timmy Lange. Now do you see why you only need to match fingers for the *last* name on the door markers? What did we figure out about the names, huh, Timmy?" "That on the ... left we got a three finger door, that's Dr. Lee, then the two-hands door, for Dr. Rabinowitz, and then..."

Sometimes Timmy couldn't remember the exact sequence of finger-names on each door, like the times when the hall ash-trays had too many twisted paper butts in them, and he had to break stride and carefully clean them

out, or when somebody spilled something on the sand-color hall carpeting, and he had to squirt the clear funny-smelling stuff from the big white bottle onto the stain, then rub and rub until the stain wasn't there anymore. Today had been a day when he got goofed up and wasn't sure which door was coming up next. There was a dirty spot on the low-nubbed carpeting—somehow *sand*-color carpet didn't make sense to Timmy; this place was a *Marine* research lab, and after Daddy told him that "marine" meant *Sea Hunt* and *Flipper*, and the old French man whose name Timmy couldn't pronounce (his tongue, already too big for his mouth, got all twisted and knotted around the word) who went out in the water all the time, and even Timmy knew that water was *blue*, or bluish green when it sat in a big hole or took up a lot of space, so why wasn't the hallway carpet blue too?—and Timmy had to squeeze out most of the clear white stuff from the bottle and rub and rub it until he got himself all turned around on the rug from his effort, and when he got up, he wasn't sure which side of the hallway he'd been cleaning. So he had had to roll the janitors' cart from door to door, matching fingers to door plaques, until he figured out which ones he'd cleaned and which ones he hadn't.

Timmy was glad that no one was





CUTTLEFISH

still around to see him goof up so bad; the few times he'd started working while the doctors were still in their offices, they'd look at him funny and make him wonder if his tongue had popped out of his mouth again, or make nasty remarks that he pretended not to hear. It wasn't nice, and when he told Daddy about it, Daddy just told him that no matter *what* sort of title some people had in front of their names, it didn't make them better people. Maybe smarter, but *better*, no. Daddy ruffled Timmy's short hair (Daddy would cut it real short because Timmy sometimes used to forget to comb it) and told him that he thought that Timmy was a good boy, that it didn't matter about his big tongue, or the way he "read" with his fingers, that what a person's *insides* were like was all that counted. Timmy hoped that Daddy was right, that the doctors who were unkind were maybe bad inside, or had their insides put in *wrong*, so that their minds and mouths didn't work right sometimes. But just to be safe, he hung around the restrooms, making sure they were real clean, until he was pretty sure that all the mean doctors were gone.

Now that he had ticked off the letters of Dr. Curwen's name, Timmy smiled broadly. He liked Dr. Curwen. And his fishies that looked like rainbows sneezing. Happily, he fumbled with his big brass ring of keys, searching for the passkey he used ten times a night, every night. He just had a hard time *finding* it each time, that's all. Some of the doctors suggested that he "put a bow on it," but Daddy had said to ignore them....

Once he had the elusive key safely in hand, he spent another couple of minutes fumbling it into the tiny slot under the knob (he had trouble putting little things in tiny places. The teacher at his special school had said, "Take your time, Timmy, you've plenty of time. Nobody's holding a stopwatch over you," but to this day, he sometimes looked up to see if the big stopwatch was silently ticking away over his short-clipped head) until the skinny metal key slid home. HAVING OPENED THE LOCK, Timmy swung the door open wide enough for himself and his cart.

Timmy wasn't too surprised to see that Dr. Curwen had left on the lights

in his lab; Dr. Curwen was like Timmy...sometimes the old man *forgot* to do things, because of all the *other* things on his mind. Like the way Timmy used to forget to comb his hair sometimes because he was too busy thinking about how the sand colored carpet at work should have been *blue*, so Daddy had got out the dippers and given Timmy an excuse not to comb his hair any more, because how could he comb it once it all fell on the kitchen floor? (Dr. Curwen, upon hearing from Timmy about his new quasi-military haircut, and why he got it, had solemnly told Timmy, "Too much valuable time has been wasted throughout the centuries

Dr. Curwen told Timmy that the cuttlefish could communicate in a special way, not unlike the deaf people Timmy had gone to school with a few years back.

on haircare, Tim. You are now a man with enviable free time on your hands. I envy you, sir," and he ran his knobby fingers through his shock of hair.)

If any of the other doctors had said that to Timmy, they would have made it sound *mean*, like when Dr. Hathaway (eight fingers) had called him "skin-head." When Dr. Curwen said things, his faded gray eyes twinkled, and his smile was in his eyes, too. (Timmy had noticed that a *real* smile didn't just come from the mouth.)

At the far end of the lab, Timmy saw the rainbow-sneezing fish, only Dr. Curwen called them "cuttlefish," or sometimes a long, funny-sounding name, *sepia officinalis*, explaining to Timmy (as if Timmy were one of the doctors, and not the fellow who cleaned up *after* the doctors) that the word *sepia* was also used by people to describe a certain type of brown ink, and ever since then Timmy had been extra careful with any pen he found which used brown ink—it might have come from his small friends in the tank. Sometimes, they stained the water in the big tank with clouds of dark billowing color, and other times they used

plain old water to push their odd-shaped bodies around. Dr. Curwen explained that these fish were from the same family as the squid (Timmy didn't know what a squid was, but nodded his head when he heard about it), because both "species" had ten feelerlike legs near their mouths. To Timmy, the cuttlefish legs looked more like wet feathers, trailing around their heads. Actually the cuttlefish didn't even *look* like fish—at least not the fish toys he used to float in his bathtub a couple of years ago, and not like the fish shown in his *Children's Bible Stories* picture book back home. To Timmy, the cuttlefish were *magical-looking*... the first time he had seen them twist inside out (or so it looked to Timmy), shifting color and shape in a ripple of supple motion, he had dropped his mop and run out of the door, almost too scared to go back into the office and get his wheeled bucket. But the next day, he came early to the office, and timidly asked Dr. Curwen about the weird things in the tank. That had been almost two years ago, before Dr. Curwen figured out how to *talk* to the strange floppy fish in the tank. And *last* year, the doctor had figured out how to figure out what the fishes said *back*.

Not that they actually *talked*, like Timmy and the doctor did, using their mouths and making sounds come out. But Dr. Curwen told Timmy that the fish could *communicate* in a special way, not unlike the deaf people Timmy had gone to school with a few years back. Did Timmy remember how they used their hands and arms to say things to each other? Timmy nodded, intent on the shimmering globules of living color in the tank, winking at their big round eyes. Dr. Curwen said that he should have thought of it *years* ago, but everyone had assumed that cuttlefish change color and shape for the simple reason of scaring off potential predators... only after closely observing the fish, sometimes for weeks at a time, on a round-the-clock basis using both his eyes and video tape, he had learned *patterns* and *responses* in their shape and color shifting... and soon, just like in Timmy's favorite movie, *Dr. Dolittle*, Dr. Curwen could *talk* to the animals! (Well, only the *fish*...) Dr. Curwen confided to Timmy that the other doctors were *skeptical* (assuming as a matter of fact that Timmy would know what the big word meant) about his research, claiming that it was meaningless, that there was no biological "Rosetta Stone" (Timmy had thought *Rosey-what stone!*) for him to make valid "translations," and so on....

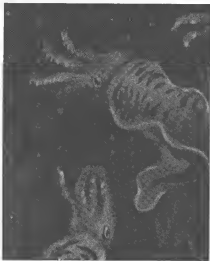
Nonetheless, the government kept giving Dr. Curwen more money and soon the tank housing his watery subjects grew bigger, and *changed*. The tank that Timmy saw now was just a bit different than it was yesterday; there were even more wires attached to the clear surfaces of the tank with sticky pads, and the big screen which was hooked up via the wires to the tank was still on, still crawling with five and six finger words that Timmy couldn't figure out. In some places (as Dr. Curwen explained to him one evening) the big words were surrounded by funny hooked things, pairs of [], that meant that the computer had added in a word that *people* could understand in place of a word which the fish "said" that had no human equivalent (another of Dr. Curwen's mouth-filling big words). Dr. Curwen assured Timmy that the hooked-things-surrounded words were things that the fish meant to say after Timmy asked if the computer was putting in things that the fish didn't really say, just because the computer *thought* they should be said. Daddy did that for Timmy a lot; he'd never let Timmy answer for himself if someone asked Timmy how he was doing, or what was "shakin'" or what Timmy wanted to order in the hamburger place on Saturday afternoons. Daddy would automatically answer for Timmy, as if Timmy couldn't talk for himself, or didn't know what he wanted to eat ... sometimes, Timmy wondered if Daddy didn't want people knowing that Timmy had a big tongue, that if he hid his tongue everything would be that elusive "all right" that Daddy mentioned so many times in connection with Timmy.

Timmy approached the tank and the attached screen, he looked hard, scrunching up his weak eyes, at the pale green lettering against the soft black background, remembering what Dr. Curwen told him about the hooked things not actually being a *part* of the word inside, thus not needing to be finger-counted along with the rest of the word, but it didn't help him understand the flickering letters any better:

- [SHAKE] LAND LARGE [SHAKE] ALL LAND
[HERE] [UNDER] ALL [HERE] [SOON] LARGE
[POWER] LAND [SHAKE] ALL [BROKEN] OFF
[UNDER] [HERE] ALL [SHAKING] ALL
[BROKEN] [HERE] LARGE [CRACK] [UNDER]
LAND LARGE -

All the letters and the surrounding hooked things meant to Timmy was just a lot of fingers counting up the unknown. Yet, he *did* wish he could read the big screen words on the screen, and

could work the keyboard that activated the bank of many closely-bunched colored light bulbs (Timmy recalled Christmas window displays, and the bright lights on the trees in houses on his street), the keyboard the doctor used to make the lights blink on and off in seemingly random patterns that the fish interpreted as words, and messages. A couple of times, Dr. Curwen asked Timmy if he wanted to say anything to the fish, and shyly Timmy asked if Dr. Curwen could tell the fish for him that Timmy thought they were real pretty. As he did so, Dr. Curwen explained that the fish "like compliments," and soon the fish began their rainbow gya-



tions, and words formed in wavering green on the dark screen, and Dr. Curwen carefully pointed out and read each word aloud:

[THANK] YOU [TIMMY] YOU [NICE] [LOOK]
TO [US] [TOO] [WE] [AFFECTION] YOU
[TIMMY]

That exchange made Timmy's face go all red right up to his brush-topped scalp (he could see his reflection in the brightly lit, polished sides of the tank) and he mumbled, "Nah, you just makin' that up, Doc." The doctor said no, not at all, that the cuttlefish weren't like *people*, despite the fact that they were intelligent, and *attuned* to the world (whatever that meant) and, most important, that they had *different* standards of what was beautiful, and what they found to be good in other creatures. "They don't like Dr. Hathaway, either," Dr. Curwen added, with a sly smile, and then he and Timmy both began to laugh. Timmy even got to shake some special fishie food into the big tank for his new friends, the rainbow-sneezing fish.

Today, the cuttlefish kept on doing

their bizarre move-talking, making more and more words flash by on the screen so fast they were only a cool green blur to Timmy:

- [BROKEN] LAND ALL LARGE [BROKEN]
[CRACK] ALL [TO] HAPPEN [SOON] NOT
GOOD LARGE [SHAKING] [SOON] [SOON]
LAND TO BE [UNDER] WATER [SOON] LARGE
[CRACK] [GET] [VERY] LARGE LAND [SPLIT]
[AT] [CRACK] LARGE [SPLIT] [NOI] GOOD
LARGE [SHAKING] [SOON] [SOON] [DR
CURWEN] SAY NOT [GOOD] [WHY] [DR CUR-
WEN] [EXPLAIN] -

as he worked cleaning the floor near the door, and dusted off the shelves. Suddenly, the screen went blank, and the fish (all six of them) propelled themselves away from the sensory screen part of the tank, and all hovered in the water, facing Timmy. Pausing in his work, Timmy said out loud, even though he didn't *think* they could hear him (but didn't some of those deaf kids at the special school read *lips*!), "Hi, fellahs! You want some fishie food? Want eats?" He took their frantic metamorphosis in their tank as a "Yes," and walked over to the tank, box of fishie food in hand. Near the tank, behind a solid-based worktable, he saw Dr. Curwen lying on the floor, mouth open the way Daddy's did when he fell asleep watching wrestling on the TV. A few tiny white pills were scattered around Dr. Curwen on the floor. When Timmy came near, the doctor weakly fluttered his eyelids (just like Timmy did when he was *real* tired) and fanned his blue-ribbed hands over the pills scattered around him, and he moved his lips but made no sound. Timmy saw that the doctor was already tired (he was an old man, older than Daddy even), and decided that he'd had *enough* sleeping pills already and didn't need any more, so Timmy pried the tiny metal bottle (it sure didn't look like Daddy's sleeping pill bottle, but maybe *doctor's* sleeping pills) out of the doctor's dry, cool grip, and carefully picked up the tiny white pills, shaking his head while Dr. Curwen gave him begging looks. As he placed the white pills on the counter (luckily they were flat and didn't roll) because he couldn't manage the finer finger work to get them back *into* the bottle, Timmy solemnly told the doctor, "It ain't good for you to take too many of these, Doc. You might get real sick and need your stomach pumped." (Old Mrs. Coffey from down the street once took too many pills and the men in the big van came and took her and Daddy told Timmy they had to *pump* her stomach out, then he told Timmy to

CUTTLEFISH

never, *never* touch the bottles in the medicine chest in the bathroom, unless Timmy wanted *his* stomach pumped out too!

Down on the floor, Dr. Curwen began to breathe funny, like Daddy did when he was nodding off in his big chair near the window, and Timmy said, "See, you don't need no more pills ... you'll sleep real good now." Timmy didn't think that the floor was a very comfortable place to sleep, now that the doctor closed his eyes and began to make raspy breathing sounds through his nose, but since the doctor was asleep it might not be a good idea to wake him up and lead him to the couch. Didn't Daddy get mad when Timmy woke him up to go and get him a glass of water because Timmy was scared to get out of bed after the house was dark? Dr. Curwen was always so nice to him, Timmy hated to risk getting the old man mad. And it wasn't like the floor was *cold*, so maybe it was okay to let him keep sleeping on the floor. After all, it was *his* floor in *his* office. Dr. Curwen didn't have a daddy to *make* him get up and go to bed, so Timmy decided to let him be. He just wouldn't mop around the floor there and risk getting the doctor's white lab coat and straggly white hair wet. He didn't think Dr. Curwen would mind.

The fish had been watching Timmy tend to Dr. Curwen intently, finally stopping—their fluid, colorful monologue. The task at hand finished, Timmy approached the tank, food box in hand, but oddly the fish didn't seem interested—they all jetted over to the sensory panels, and began their shimmering rainbow dance anew. Behind Timmy, words flickered on the screen:

[TIMMY] [HELP] [DR CURWEN] HE NOT
GOOD NOW HE [FELL] DOWN HE [HURTING]
HE [NEED] [TO GET] UP [TO TELL] US [WHY]
LARGE LAND [SPLIT] NOT GOOD [GET]
[HELP] [GET] [OTHER] [DOCTORS] [GET] [DR
HATHAWAY] [HELP] HIM [HELP] HIM -

And he turned around in time to see the hated Dr. Hathaway's eight-finger name flash against the darkness of the glassy monitor surface, and he wondered if they were telling Timmy that they *didn't* like Dr. Hathaway, that

they really *did* like Timmy better. That was important; for he had sometimes wondered if Dr. Curwen was pulling his leg about what the fish supposedly said, but now he was happy in his new belief that the fish did like *him* better.

Overjoyed, Timmy shook down the food into the tank, where the flakes floated down in lazy, slow spirals. The minute agitation in the water made the half-dozen cuttlefish turn around to look at Timmy, at his smiling face (he took pains to keep his dangled old tongue in and at his expression of utter joy. A couple of them attempted half-hearted color changes, then all hung quiet and limp-looking in the gently

*Near the tank,
behind a work-
table, Timmy saw
Dr. Curwen lying
on the floor,
mouth open. A
few tiny white
pills were
scattered
around him.*

bubbling water, under the swirl of descending food. Their huge round eyes goggled at Timmy, and *somehow*, Timmy knew (sensed?) that the fish seemed *sad*. Dr. Curwen had once told Timmy that these fish, as far away from their natural habitat as they were, were somehow still in *touch* with their deep watery home, with the entire *planet*, as it were. They could *feel* the living vibrations of the earth, the minute-to-minute messages which the earth sent out to all living creature—if only they were able to *understand*. That was what the doctor had been working on lately, or what he told Timmy he was doing; getting the fish to tell him what they felt, what the earth was "telling" them via subtle vibrations that men could not feel. The doctor got all excited, telling Timmy that part, explaining that the cuttlefish were like "natural seismographs and I don't know *what* else yet ... but I'll let you know more soon. They are so eager to *tell* me things! The more of our language they can figure out, the more they can tell me. You'd never dream they could be so *articulate* ... such innate *knowledge*, such clear thinking. And *emphatic*,

compassionate, too. Unbelievable! Me-thinks God put the wrong creatures in charge of the planet." There was more, too, something about how Dr. Curwen compared the actions of the cuttlefish to those of mammals in certain "stress situations," but Timmy had had to go and clean up in the other offices, so he had left Dr. Curwen in mid-sentence. The doctor hadn't seemed to mind.

Timmy wondered if maybe the fish could sense what people were *feeling*, too. But that didn't make sense. *Timmy* wasn't feeling sad ... but then, he thought, *maybe I should be feeling sad?* Like when Aunt Millie who Timmy didn't even *know* because she had been in an old people's home since he was two years old had died, and Daddy ended up yelling at him for not acting "right" in the funeral home. Timmy hadn't *known* that it wasn't "right" to comb his hair during what Daddy called the "visitation," and *besides*, it didn't seem fair that he should get yelled at when he *didn't* remember to comb his hair, and also get yelled at when he *did* remember to comb his hair. Even though his stranger aunt was long buried, and his long hair long gone, he remembered that Daddy had expected him to act like he was *sad* during the funeral, saying "She is dead, Timmy, and people are supposed to feel very sad when someone dies."

As he watched the fish listlessly hover in their watery home, Timmy wondered if the fish were sad because of something they knew which Timmy didn't, like with his Aunt Millie. A rare mental connection made him go back to where Dr. Curwen lay on the lab floor. He looked and looked at the old man, and gradually, as he rubbed a hand over his closely shorn scalp (making a faint bristling noise) Timmy reached a conclusion: the old man was not breathing anymore. Yet another connection was formed in his usually carefree mind: his Aunt Millie wasn't breathing in that big brown wooden box in the funeral home either ... and *she* was old, too!

Suddenly sad (and a little scared, too), this time for *real*, Timmy looked about the lab for something to put over the doctor (just in case he *was* sleeping real *deep*, and got cold), finally settling on an extra lab coat, which he spread out carefully over the old man, tucking in the sides the way Daddy did not too long ago for Timmy, but leaving his white-haired head uncovered, just in case.

When he turned back to the fish, they were all rippling and color-sneezing over by the sensors, forming

these words across the monitor.

[CAN] YOU [UNDERSTAND] US [TIMMY] [DR
CURWEN] [MAY] BE DEAD [THE] LAND
[SPLUTTING] [CRACK] [MUST] [HAVE]
SCARED HIM [IS NOT] GOOD [THING] WILL
[HAPPEN] [SOON] HURRY [TIMMY] LEAVE
[THIS] PLACE [GO] FAR OFF NO LAND
[CRACK] [SPLUTTING] FAR OFF [FROM] YOU
[IF] [DR CURWEN] [IS] DEAD [NOT] GOOD
[FOR] YOU [FOR] PEOPLE HURRY [GO]
[TIMMY] -

A pause, while the fish bobbed changelessly, then, as an afterthought meant only for each other, a last expression of futility:

[TIMMY] [CAN] NOT [UNDERSTAND] US HE
[CAN] NOT [READ] -

Timmy watched the changing video display in puzzlement. They were talking to him, that much he could tell (he *could* read and write his name, laboriously, in an ascending printed scrawl—it was a one-hand word) but he didn't know what the rest of the fishes' words meant. If only Dr. Curwen would wake up! (If he can *wake up*, Timmy's mind warned him, but he was too scared to actually try to shake the doctor awake.)

Then, in the midst of his fear, Timmy had a flash of inspiration, his third of the night, and a reason for pride in him. He remembered that whenever someone who hadn't met the deaf kids in his special school class tried to talk to them, they'd point to their ears and shake their heads *no*, and do likewise after pointing to their mouths. Dr. Curwen said that the fish were very intelligent, that they were *sensitive* ... they had eyes, could see, so maybe ...

Tapping on the tank to get their attention, Timmy pointed to the screen, then to his eyes, and shook his head quickly, the way he did when Daddy gave him his first electric shaver haircut in the kitchen. Daddy hadn't paid any attention to him then, but the fish immediately seemed to notice his actions, and after looking at each other, color sneezing, they propelled themselves over to the sensors once again. Timmy stopped shaking his head, sighed, and thought, *And the doc said they were smart*. They'd paid attention to him all right, but didn't *understand*. Slowly shaking his head in disgust, Timmy walked over to his wheeled bucket and mop, and began to gather up his belongings. Under his feet, the floor shook a little, and he wondered if something had gone *ka-boom* on one of the lower floors. Either that or a big

truck must have gone by outside, shaking the ground. Sometimes, at home, the ground would shake a little, making the dishes rattle and dance on the shelves, and when Timmy would get scared Daddy would say "Big truck went by, Timmy ... just a real big truck. Lots of big trucks in California." This time, nothing tipped over, so Timmy immediately forgot about the shaking floor. Looking back at the display screen, he saw the message the fish had left for him:

WE [LOVE] YOU [TIMMY]

Timmy understood his name, and decided that since he was getting ready to leave the office, the fish had to be saying goodbye to him. He decided to pretend that he was as smart as the doctor (*it can't hurt*) and went over and tapped on the tank until all his funny-looking small friends were staring at him with their saucerlike eyes. He solemnly waved bye-bye to each fish in turn, and behind him the screen lit up

with these words, as the cuttlefish broke away in turn and faced the sensors:

WE [ARE] [SORRY] YOU [DO NOT] [UNDER-
STAND] YOU [COULD] HAVE [ESCAPED]
[PERHAPS] WE WILL [MISS] YOU [AFTER]
THE NOT GOOD LARGE LAND [CRACK]
[COMES] [AT] [LEAST] YOU [NOT] SCARED
[LIKE] [DR CURWEN] WE WILL [MISS] YOU
[TIMMY]

unseen and unreadable by Timmy, yet ... not totally lost or meaningless. A couple of fish came close to their side of the glass, and brushed their waving supple arms against the glass. Glad that Dr. Curwen was asleep (please *just be sleeping doc, I like you*) and not able to see him looking silly, Timmy bent down and kissed the cool glass of the tank, and the six fishes in turn came close to the glass behind his puckered lips (up close Timmy found them pretty and horrible all at once) in an imitation of his gesture, so maybe they weren't so

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FORGE

(continued from page 30)

bracing back against one side and feet against the other, inching his way. That took an additional five minutes. Twelve minutes had passed and he was tiring, but not yet winded.

Crouching in the low, almost horizontal tunnel, he jerked free the slip knot attaching the monkey to the stake, and began to haul it up the chimney as fast as he could. The cylinder weighed at least seventy pounds and the effort made his arm muscles knot.

With the cylinder almost over the edge, he heard Gilmorn's voice echoing from below.

"How are you doing, Colonel?"

"Almost there," he answered. His arms were twin agonies. The radiation jacket chafed and was becoming a major irritation.

"We're going now."

"You have twenty-five minutes," the lieutenant added.

"Gotcha."

He switched on the electric torch, placed the warhead perpendicular to the tunnel, and rolled it ninety feet to the lip of the antechamber. Resting his arms for only a moment, he scrambled over the weapon, detached the ropes, then lifted it and waddled duck-like to deposit it in the center of the cylindrical space. He placed it on its end and opened the cover plate to see that the timer was still working. It was. He closed the cover plate.

As he shined the torch at the larger chamber beyond, a grin flickered on his lips. The impassive gray faceting reflected the beam back in a myriad dull gleams. "Here's thanks for you," he murmured.

Twenty minutes. He could be down the tunnel and two miles away. He pulled a knife from his trouser pocket and sliced away the crotch strap on the jacket, then shrugged it off and flung it aside. He slid along the horizontal tunnel, ignoring the heat of the friction on his elbows and butt, and stopped long enough to take a deep breath and prepare to shinny down the chimney. Instinctively wary of heading into even the most familiar darkness, he played his torch beam down.

Three yards below, the beam met a dead end.

Rogers stared at the blockage in disbelief.

It might have been there through all eternity, a flat plug as dark and featureless as the walls of the chimney itself.

"Holy Christ," he said.

Eighteen minutes.

He was out of the horizontal tunnel and beside the bomb before he could even think. With amazing dexterity, he had the cover plate open and his finger on the cut-off switch. And then he froze, his face wet with sweat, salty drops stinging his eyes.

No way out. Even if he stopped the timer on the monkey, he could not

*He sat down
beside the bomb.
The silence
within the
chamber was
absolute. "If
you're listening,
damn you," he
said, "then talk
to me."*

think of any way he could escape. A dozen unlikely possibilities lined themselves up in panicky parade. Perhaps another opening had been made elsewhere. Perhaps the bogey was coming alive, finally, even preparing to lift off.

Perhaps a bargain was being struck.

Deactivate the bomb, and we'll let you go.

He backed away from the cylinder, his torch swinging back and forth on the floor nearby. *Why did it close up? Has it been active all along, watching us, guessing everything we'd do?*

He propped himself against the curve of the antechamber near the horizontal tunnel. Sixteen minutes.

In five or six minutes, it probably wouldn't matter whether he got out or not. He wouldn't be far enough away from the bogey to survive the hail of shrapnel. He could not conceive of any vessel, even the size of a small mountain, withstanding an internal blast of three kilotons.

Rogers shook his head slowly, trying to concentrate, keep his mind from

wandering, he could turn off the weapon and see if the way was opened again. *Tit for tat. Scratch my back, I'll scratch yours. Sorry, it was all a big misunderstanding.*

Kneeling beside the monkey, he again reached out for the switch.

You know, this is the first time we've actually gotten a reaction.

He thought that over, biting his lower lip, fingers tensing and relaxing over the switch.

"Maybe you feel threatened," he said aloud. "Maybe for the first time we're getting through to you."

Somehow, that wasn't convincing. He could not bring himself to flip the switch. He would not be able to reset the timer if he shut the weapon off; the lieutenant had not shown him how to do that.

Fourteen minutes.

The first blow for our side. I'm in charge.

He sat down beside the monkey, reaching out to bring up the radiation jacket and drape it over his knees. *Quandary.*

The silence within the chamber was absolute.

"If you're listening, damn you, then talk to me," he said. "Tell me about yourself." He chuckled and that sound scared him worst of all, for it told him how close he really was to flipping the switch. He might see his wife and kid again if he flipped the switch; they might not have to receive and read the letter he had posted on his bulletin board. He could see Clare's face, mourning, and his chest hurt.

William's face, sweet five-year-old devilry pure.

What would he think of himself if he deactivated?

His career might as well be over. He would have fallen back in the face of enemy action and jeopardized their entire defense effort. Others had risked their careers, perhaps even their lives. Rogers did not, right now, want to contemplate how many people up the line had helped to procure this weapon, and how they felt at this moment: possible traitors, lawbreakers, risk-takers. Acting in defiance of the President. Mutineers, rebels.

"God damn, you know us so well," he said to the darkness. "You've twisted us every which way, so casual, and now you think you've got us again." No reply.

The silence of deep space. Eternities. Twelve minutes.

How many times would his hand reach out, the body pleading, and how many times would something unde-

fined pull it back?

"I won't touch it. Come on out and deactivate it yourself. Maybe I won't put up a fight. Maybe we have something in common now!"

He was hyperventilating. Clasp his hands before his mouth, he tried to re-breathe each gulp of air and slow down his frantic lungs. Did judgment of one's courage, valor, require the appearance of nobility, or was an act alone sufficient? If by the end of the—he checked—eleven minutes, he was on the floor, a screaming, weeping madman capable only of keeping his finger away from the switch, would he still get to the army Valhalla and toss off a few with all the dead heroes? Or would he be turned away, sent to the showers? *Wash off that stink of fear, soldier.*

He didn't want Valhalla. He wanted Clare and William. He wanted to say good-bye in more words than he had put in the letter. In person.

"Please God let me be calm," he said hoarsely. He flattened his cupped hand into a gesture of prayer, pinching the tip of his nose between his index fingers, closing his eyes. It might have been easier if he had brought a pistol along. "Jesus Jesus Jesus Christ."

Don't let me fuck this one up. Dear God keep my hand from that switch. Hit them back hit them back in the face. God I know you don't take sides but I'm a soldier God and this is what I have to do. Take care of them please Lord of all of us and help us save our home, our world. Let this mean something please God.

Nine minutes. He crawled down the horizontal tunnel again and saw the plug was still in place. To make sure it was solid, and not just an illusion, he jumped the three yards and landed his feet squarely on the flat grayness, flexing his knees to break the shock, slamming his elbows and lower arms against the chimney wall. Solid. He stomped on it several times. Nothing. Grimacing from his bruised heels, he braced himself and climbed out of the well, returning to the antechamber.

He refused to allow himself to get closer than six feet from the monkey.

Another way out.

Not likely.

Tit for tat.

"What are you doing, learning more about us, setting up another experiment? Will I or won't I?" He stood on the edge of the antechamber, waving his torch beams across the semi-glossy cathedral facets. "I can't make sense out of any of this. Why did you

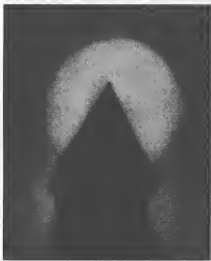
come here? Why can't you just go away, leave me with my wife and family?"

That was enough talking, and a fine sentiment to end all the words he had ever spoken. No more words, he vowed. He broke the vow immediately. Breaking small vows helped him keep to the big one.

"So why don't we talk? I'm not going to push that switch, so I won't be around to tell anybody. Talk to me, show me what you're all about."

Five minutes.

"I hear you might have gone clear across this galaxy, gone from star to star. You're part of a planet-eating



machine. That's what the newspapers are saying. Lots of people speculating. Aren't you curious what we'd think, what I'd think if I knew the truth? So talk to me." *Give me something to hang on to. Some reason.* "I'm not touching that switch! That bomb is going to go off."

What if it didn't?

What if he had to spend the next few weeks in here, dying of thirst, all for nothing, because the aliens had found some way to deactivate the weapon? What if they kept him there to starve just as punishment for trying?

Three minutes.

"I'm a dead man," he said, and realized the truth of that. He was a dead soldier already. There was no escape, no way out between his convictions and his duty. That thought calmed him considerably, and he sat on the lip of the antechamber, as he had sat once before, legs dangling out over the darkness. "So where's your light?" he asked. "Show me your little red light."

He wouldn't even know when it had happened. He wouldn't hear

anything, see anything.

One minute.

*Frozen men become warm again
And rabbits drug themselves in
the wolf's jaws*

God gives us ways out

I'm still thinking

But it doesn't hurt now.

I know how very small and inconsequential

I

From six miles away, Senator Gilmonn put on the smoky gray glasses the lieutenant gave to him and looked across the desert at the distant black hump that was the bogey. The cultists had scattered all across the desert floor, most out of the area, farther away than his small group, but some hiding behind piles of rock and other cinder cones. He had no idea how many of the die-hards would survive.

"He's not out of there," the lieutenant said, removing a pair of radio headphones. Observers in the mountains had not seen Rogers leave the bogey.

"I wonder what happened?" Gilmonn asked. "Did he plant the ... it?"

Beams of brilliant red light shot up from the false cinder cone, and then the desert floor was illuminated by a small sun. Huge black fragments twisted upward in silhouette against the fireball, disintegrating, the smaller fragments falling back in smoking arcs. The sound was a palpable wall, more solid and painful than loud, and a violent blast of dusty wind progressed visibly over the scrub and sand and rock. When it hit they had a hard time keeping their feet.

The dust cleared momentarily and they saw a tall, lean pillar of cloud rising, a fascinating ugly yellow-green, shot through with pastel pinks and purples and reds.

The lieutenant was weeping. "My God, he didn't get out. Dear Jesus. What a blast! Like a goddamned pipe-bomb."

Senator Gilmonn, too stunned to react, decided he simply did not understand. The lieutenant understood, and his face was shiny with tears.

Fragments of rock and glass and metal fell for ten miles around for the next two hours. At six miles, none of the fragments exceeded half an inch in diameter.

They took refuge in the trucks and waited out the shower, and then drove away from the site to the decontamination center in Shoshone. ■

VOICES

(continued from page 35)

And heard, clear and crisp as though it had been recorded yesterday, *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini* ... sad, sweet, and beautiful ... encapsulating, for Knowles, the nobility and the tragedy of this ruined planet. He closed his eyes, briefly, listening intently, and when he opened them—

The store was filled with ... people. Dozens of them, examining the electronics gear, on line at the sales counter, looking through the bins. The room filled with the sound of their voices as they talked among themselves ... like the voices on the subway. Knowles jumped back reflexively, choking off a scream—

And noticed that the people were not quite ... right. They seemed solid enough, but the texture of their skin was subtly wrong, strangely different; their clothes, as well as their flesh, had the same sallow color as the air itself. They looked oddly forlorn, as well, their actions mechanical—as though they walked and talked and moved through habit, rather than inspiration. Astonished, fearful, Knowles backed away toward the exit, unable to tear his gaze away from the tableau in front of him; as he reached the door, he turned ... and stopped dead in his tracks.

A young man, sallow and strangely textured as the others, stood blocking the door. There was something both sad and sinister in his face, and in his tone of voice; or perhaps it was the odd way in which sound carried through the non-oxygenated air.

"Don't you remember us ... Professor?" he said, softly.

Knowles screamed and leapt back. The spectral figure seemed to dissolve into dust before the scream faded completely. Knowles turned to look for another exit—and saw that the other apparitions were now gone, as well.

Knowles felt his heart racing faster than it had in years. He leaned against one of the bins, trying to regulate his breathing, to calm himself; after several minutes, he felt composed enough to call the others on his communicator.

To their credit, Archer and Bledsoe didn't laugh outright when they heard his story, but there was scant

sympathy in their faces as they listened to what Knowles realized, even as he related it, was a preposterous tale. Jacinda seemed concerned but it was clear that she, too, could hardly take Knowles's word on face value. Ten minutes later, with Archer and Bledsoe canvassing every inch of the store with their pocket sensors, Archer announced: "Nothing. No energy readings at all, aside from normal background levels of cosmic radiation."

"You're certain?" Jacinda said, standing beside an increasingly-worried Knowles.

Archer nodded. "Positive. If there was anything here, it didn't leave much

At the end of the tunnel a subway train waited, lifeless, as it had for centuries. He stood, eyes shut, wishing himself back a thousand years or more—and heard voices.

behind."

"If?" Knowles stepped forward. "Are you suggesting there was no—"

"Every living thing leaves behind some kind of energy trace," Archer said patiently, "even—"

"Then perhaps it wasn't alive! Perhaps it was some sort of ... alien illusion."

Jacinda shook her head. "We're the only ship in the system, Donald. If there were another anywhere within half a light-year, we'd know."

"Damn it," Knowles said, his patience wearing thin, "I'm telling you, I saw—"

Bledsoe, across the room, suddenly spoke up. "I'm getting an energy reading."

He was standing at the far wall, pointing his sensor at the bank of electronics equipment. The others hurried to his side; Knowles breathed a sigh of relief. "There!" he said. "I knew it."

"What kind of energy?" Jacinda asked.

"Simple electrical field." Bledsoe nodded toward one of the machines. "Some residual traces in the solar porta-pack batteries. Here." He reached

out, tapped a few touchpads on the machine ... and immediately several full-scale holographic images were projected into free space: a man and a woman talking (though the sound was turned off) and walking in the midst of the four space travelers.

Bledsoe's smile was faintly mocking. "Sure these aren't what you saw, Professor?"

Knowles was indignant. "I know the difference between holograms and—and—"

"Ghosts?" Bledsoe was baiting him.

"I didn't say that!"

Bledsoe slapped the sensor back into his utility pack, started to stalk, disgusted, to the door.

"Ghosts!" he snapped. "Of all the ... Hard enough doing this goddamn job without dragging along civilians to—"

"That will be enough, Mr. Bledsoe." Jacinda's tone was sharper than Knowles had ever heard it. Bledsoe stopped, saw the fire in her gaze, and nodded tightly. "Yes, ma'am."

"You and Mr. Archer can go back to your spectroscopic analyses. I'll join you in a moment."

The two of them nodded, exited. Jacinda turned to Knowles, her tone softening.

"I'm sorry. We've just had some bad experiences with civilian observers. Try and stay out of their way; all right?"

Knowles sighed. "Do you believe I saw what I did?"

"I'd like to. But I can't act without evidence."

Knowles nodded. "Yes, of course."

Jacinda touched him on the shoulder and left. Knowles wandered around the empty store, sighed, and stooped to pick up a fallen music disc. He straightened ... then, remembering something he forgot to mention, tabbed the communicator at the base of his throat. But before he could say a word, a voice suddenly issued from his own communicator—a quiet voice, with a single question:

"You really *don't* remember us ... do you, Professor?"

It was the voice of the young man in the doorway.

Knowles lay on his bunk, unable to sleep; each time he closed his eyes he saw the pale, mournful face of the young man, an ineffable sadness in his eyes and in his voice. Odd—so odd: if they were, indeed, ghosts, they seemed more haunted than haunting. He felt, inexplicably, a certain *pity* for them

... irrational because he knew nothing of these beings, least of all if they were hostile or not. And yet ...

Giving up on sleep, he got up, dressed, left his cabin and headed for the galley to make coffee. Halfway there, he passed the bridge—where, to his surprise, Jacinda sat at a sensor web, making notations, stifling a yawn. He hesitated in the doorway a moment, then stepped into the bridge; hearing him enter, Jacinda swiveled in her seat, smiled tiredly.

"Donald. You're up late."

Knowles sat down beside her. The readouts washed each of them in a soft orange light. "So are you."

Jacinda sighed, nodded toward the sensors. "Lots of data to log. There's still a treasure-trove of minerals in this planet. The inhabitants pretty much bled her dry of fossil fuels, but there's a wealth of basalt, iron, uranium ..."

For a moment he almost blurted out what had happened to him after Jacinda and the others had left—but fear held him back, fear of what they might think, of how they might keep him aboard ship for the rest of the survey if he exhibited any more aberrant behavior. Instead he merely stared at the readouts, at the taped image of the Earth on the main viewscreen.

"Yes," he said, a bit distantly. "This world was blessed with an ... abundance of natural resources." He gazed at the planet in the viewscreen, so different from the one he had spent half a life studying. "It was really quite a beautiful planet, Jacinda," he said, quietly. "Amazing variety of flora, climates ranging from the temperate to the tropical, from arctic to desert. Breathtaking."

"And so much of it covered with water. Remarkable."

Knowles' eyes gleamed as he warmed to his subject. "Water. Yes. That was how it began, you know, humanity's—questing spirit? They navigated these tiny ships, propelled only by the wind—the wind!—with strips of cloth, strung up on wooden masts. They sailed the oceans, not even knowing, at first, whether they'd ... fall off the edge of the world or not."

He laughed. "Well, they didn't. They spread themselves to the far corners of the Earth, and they thrived. Ah, and the names, Jacinda, the names! India. Israel. Marseilles. Beijing. Some of them still survive. Your homeworld, Elsinore, is named after a castle in a place called Denmark, home of a mythical prince named Hamlet." He paused a moment; then, softly:

"This is where it all began, Jacinda. This is where *we* began."

Jacinda hesitated before speaking. "Donald? How did—I mean, how could they let the planet end up like ... this?"

The fond look in Knowles's eyes darkened; the wistful tone sobered. "Greed. Stupidity. The usual catalog of sins." He shook his head. "They used refrigerants that slowly ate away the ozone layer. They burned the tropical rain forests to make way for farmland, using the ashes for fertilizer, and entire species simply vanished forever from the Earth."

"By the time they'd poisoned the whole biosphere ... they had the technology to leave it behind." There was naked disgust in his voice. "So they fled into space, and cast the Earth aside like a half-eaten apple."

"And with humanity gone, the biological chain just—collapsed?"

Knowles nodded. "You know the irony of it? The Earth, today, is almost exactly as it was, millennia ago, before life emerged—before that first primordial storm rained nutrients into the oceans." He looked down. "And here we are," he added, bitterly, "returned to commit the final indignity on the planet that nurtured us. Here to put the knife to her, one last time ..."

Jacinda, offended, tried to restrain her annoyance. She stood, her voice and manner suddenly quite cool.

"Our ancestors killed this world," she said, sharply. "Not us. The law

prohibits us from mining *any* living world—only dead ones."

Knowles looked up, realizing his gaffe. "I'm sorry—I didn't mean to imply—"

"Like it or not, Donald," she went on, a bit softer, "Earth is a dead world, now. There's nothing we can do about that ... except, I suppose, be grateful we finally learned our lesson."

She turned and left the bridge. Knowles swiveled in his seat, leaned his elbow on the sensor board and put his head in his hands, cursing his own stupidity. She was right, of course; he had no call to suggest that she—

Suddenly he noticed that each of the tiny monitor screens before him had gone white with static. He looked up ... and as he did, the static was replaced with the image of—the young man.

"Do you remember us now, Professor?" he asked, sadly.

Knowles jumped, stifling a cry. He stared at the screen in astonishment and fear and—curiosity.

"Dear God in Heaven," he whispered. "What—what do you *want* from me?"

The young man looked at him with yellow eyes. "Your help, Professor," he said quietly. "That's all." A pause; then: "Can you find your way to ... Penn Station?"

He made his way uptown, as, in the early-morning darkness, the streets became filled with apparitions:



ARGYLE 22+1/8... KNIT 7 1/2+1... KNEE 4



THE NEW YORK SOCK EXCHANGE

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men, women, children, all materializing in mid-stride, walking the streets as though alive ... but joylessly, definitely not the hauntings but the haunted. They wore clothes from every era people lived on this island—from the twenty-second century to the twentieth, from the nineteenth to the seventeenth, all the way back to when this city was known as New Amsterdam.

He reached Penn Station a little before one, walking through the entry doors into a dilapidated transportation terminal; and as he shut the doors behind him, he noticed—

The air. The rolling gasses were not in evidence here; the yellow light which bathed the rest of the Earth's surface was somehow excluded from this place. Knowles looked up ... and got his second shock: the station was filled, on every level and on every square foot of floorspace, by specters like the ones he had seen on the street. Thousands of them, many gaping in wonder and amazement at him, as though he, not they, were the anomaly here.

The young man stood at the forefront, smiling. "You won't be needing that helmet anymore, Professor," he said. "The air's breathable in here."

Knowles hesitated ... then, slowly, removed his helmet. And breathed real air. "How—how did you—?"

"Difficult to explain," the man said. "We used part of our ... energies

... to change the molecular structure of the gases." He extended a hand. "My name is Blaine."

Knowles hesitated a moment, then reached out and took his hand ... finding it quite solid, but oddly textured, not like human flesh at all but some sort of simulacrum ... fashioned, perhaps, out of the same random molecules that made up the air. So intent was he on the young man that Knowles did not notice until the last moment that others were drawing closer—not threateningly, but with mounting fascination and ... hope?

"Are you ... real?" one of them asked, and Knowles had to restrain himself from asking the same thing. A young boy looked at him with eyes wide. An old man just kept smiling, as though he could not believe his good fortune; an old woman came up, touched him, lightly, on the arm, and said softly, "We've been waiting so long ..."

They were all converging on him, now, old men, young women, children, teenagers, black, white, Asian, from every time-period, every social class—"Why did you leave us ...?"

"Are you back to stay? All of you?"

"Where are the others?"
"Will they follow, in more ships?"
"Yes," said the old woman, "where are they, when are they coming?"

Knowles backed away, overwhelmed by the loneliness and desperation in their pale eyes and plaintive voices. Slowly, he began to realize who they were, and why they were here. "My God," he said, hoarsely. "All of you ... you're ..."

"The ones you left behind," Blaine said, sadly. "All the souls who ever were, all the ones who stood and

watched as your ships vanished, forever, from our sight." His voice became nearly a whisper. "All of us who couldn't follow ..."

Tears began to well up in Knowles' eyes. "We ... we never knew. We never knew you even existed ..."

"Didn't you?" Blaine asked. "Didn't a part of you *always* know?"

A little boy looked up at Knowles, eyes big, voice small. "You didn't come back ... to stay?"

Helplessly, Knowles could only shake his head. Almost as one, the apparitions exchanged glances, hope dimming in their eyes. Knowles looked to Blaine; the young man sighed. "I tried to tell them. But after so long, they didn't want to lose hope so soon."

Knowles looked again at the crowd, struggled to understand. "But—why is it so important to you? To ... to follow us?"

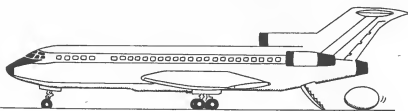
The old man—not much older than he, Knowles realized suddenly—stepped up. "You're our children," he said, patiently, as though explaining the obvious. "Our immortality. Since time began, we've walked among you, sharing in your triumphs, your despair—but now—" Bitterly: "Now there's nothing. No children, no future. Just a ... ruined playground you left behind."

Knowles was barely able to comprehend the concept, much less the immense loneliness and betrayal these people must be feeling. He searched, desperately, for some words of comfort; as well as something to ease the guilt forming in his own mind. It was irrational—he, personally, had not betrayed them; he'd been born on a world five hundred light-years, and almost ten centuries, removed from here—but he suddenly found himself spokesman for vanished humanity, the ancestors who had fled this planet, so long ago.

"It ... it doesn't have to be this way," he said, throat dry. "You can follow us, our ship—"

Blaine shook his head. "Your ships warp space in ways we can't. Those of us who've tried have come back disfigured, or insane. Can you comprehend that, Professor? Disfigurement, insanity ... not of mere flesh, but of one's immortal soul?" He seemed to repress a shiver. "No. We can't follow your ship."

"I—I could give you coordinates—" "And how would we know to get there? We're not gods, Professor. We're human beings. Or we used to be. Could you find your way to Tau Ceti, unaided?" His mouth twisted in an unhappy smile. "It's a very large universe,



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Professor. And not nearly as benign as you living like to think it is."

Knowles slumped against a wall, withering under the sad stares of the dead.

"Then what *can* I do?" he asked, helplessly. "You said you needed my help."

"Put your helmet back on." Even as Blaine said it, the light in the station made a subtle but unmistakable shift toward the yellow end of the spectrum. Knowles did as he was directed. Blaine moved closer.

"I know why you're here," he said. "Not you, but your ship, the crew."

"We're just shadows. Helpless to stop them. But you—you have to do something. Let them know this planet still contains ... life. Of a sort." He moved even closer, and as he did, Knowles thought he could see the young man's body become less opaque ... not becoming translucent, but actually losing its density, the atoms that made up the makeshift body losing their molecular cohesion, breaking up into random bits of carbon and ammonia ...

"This Earth ... ruined and gutted as it is ... is all we have left." His face started to disintegrate, skin flaking off as the soul binding it together merely shrugged it off, like a worn coat. The eyes turned to smoke; his hair, his ears, to dust. His voice was fading but urgent in the dimming light: "Don't let them take it away from us."

And when he looked up, Knowles saw that he was alone once more in the empty station.

Jacinda stood in the galley, nursing a cup of coffee, trying to collect her thoughts. She had stayed up working till well past one, finally managed perhaps half an hour's sleep—then found herself awakened again, by Donald, who now stood before her, telling some incredible story about the ghosts of all who ever died, about abandonment and betrayal and redemption.

Good God, she thought; *he seems so wild-eyed, so ... desperate*. Could this really be the same man she had studied under, years ago? Suddenly the strings she had pulled, the favors she had called in, to get Knowles on this assignment, all seemed like a tragic mistake. "Donald," she said, hesitantly, when he had finished, "do you have any idea what Archer and Bledsoe would say if they could hear you? They'd file a petition with Central to get you shipped back to Galthor faster than you could blink."

Knowles looked at her beseechingly. "All I'm asking is for you to keep an open mind. Give me a chance to prove it to you."

"Prove to me that the Earth is some sort of—haunted planet? And then what? Suspend mining operations?"

"You've heard stranger tales, in your travels, I'm sure."

Jacinda forced a smile. "Not by much." She sighed unhappily. "Donald, we've known each other a long time. Don't put me in this position."

"If I had any choice, I wouldn't. But I don't. Too much depends on it." He added, gently: "You were always



my best pupil, Jacinda. Let me teach you one last thing?"

Reluctantly, she followed him into the city, two figures enveloped in the shimmer of environment suits, walking through a long-dead city in the middle of a cold, yellowish night. They entered an abandoned transportation terminal; Jacinda set her infrared for widest possible angle, swept the beam through the station. No signs of life. Or anything else, for that matter. Knowles tabbed his communicator. "I'm activating the exterior speaker on my comm-line. You might want to do the same. To speak to them."

Jacinda reminded herself that Knowles had been correct: in her work she had seen things equally as bizarre as that which he was suggesting; alien life-forms, odd cosmic phenomena. She hoped, desperately, that Knowles was telling the truth ... as unbelievable as it might appear.

"Hello!" Knowles' voice reverberated oddly in the methane. "Hello, I've come back!"

No response. Knowles cleared his throat. "I—I've brought someone. Someone who can help. Please, let us see you!"

The words echoed off the tiled walls. Jacinda glanced down, a sinking within her stomach. Please. Let someone answer ...

"It's all right!" Knowles shouted into the darkness. "She has to see you, has to know you exist! She can call off the mining, if you just—"

Jacinda had seen enough. "Donald," she said.

Desperation crept into Knowles' voice. Where *were* they? What was going on? "Don't you understand? She can help, damn it!"

"Donald, that's enough," Jacinda said softly.

"God damn you, show yourselves!" he screamed, raggedly.

"Donald!"

Jacinda's shout made him turn round, quickly. She swallowed, feeling sick inside, sick and embarrassed and sorry for this old man she loved like a favorite uncle. But now the uncle was unbalanced, and it was up to her to save him from himself, before he humiliated himself any further.

"This is my fault," she said quickly. "I knew what this planet meant to you. I shouldn't have invited you along to watch it be ... interred." She put a hand to his arm. "Why don't I just ... forget we ever came out here. All right?"

Knowles saw the pity in her gaze and hated it. He looked from her, to the empty terminal; there were tears in his eyes.

"Please," he whispered into the dark. "Don't do this to me ..."

Jacinda took him by the elbow, gently led him out the door and back to the ship. They spoke little on the long walk back; at the door to Knowles' cabin she touched him affectionately on the shoulder, then went to her own quarters. Knowles lay down on his bunk and stared into space, tears forming again in his eyes. Why? Why were they doing this? They said they needed help; they knew he had to convince Jacinda of their existence; *why hadn't they appeared?*

The thought came to him, then, nasty and unbidden: Perhaps they hadn't appeared ... because they had never been there in the first place.

He shut his eyes tightly. Ghosts. That was all his life seemed to hold, these days, since Cara died. He was seventy-three years old, and in the last twelve months, ten of his oldest and closest friends had died. People he had grown up with, worked with, laughed with and fought with ... signposts, each of them, marking a different passage of his life. And one by one they

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were dying, the markers vanishing into memory, leaving his life somehow ... uncorroborated. He had seen Cara a hundred times since her death, seen her every time he looked at the living-room couch on which the two of them used to sit, side-by-side, reading their separate books, content in each other's presence. He'd felt her every time he caught a scent of plumeria, so like the perfume she used to wear. Were these apparitions in the city so very different? Could Jacinda be right—was he just an old man, bereaved by the loss of family, friends, and now, a planet he had loved from afar?

He didn't know. He didn't want to think about it. Slowly, he felt himself drifting to sleep, dreaming of Cara, and a green bright Earth—

—and awoke, standing, on the bridge.

There was no sense of time transition; one minute he was drifting off to sleep, and the next—

Bledsoe was wrestling with him, trying to grab something from Knowles' hands. Shocked, disoriented, Knowles staggered back, not knowing what was going on. "Bledsoe—what—"

"You stupid sonofabitch!" Bledsoe snapped, "give me that goddamn—"

Knowles' arms dropped and he saw that he was holding a length of metal, a steel rod, like the support to a computer stand. Bledsoe snatched the rod away from him, hurled it across the bridge, where it landed with a clatter. Before he could even begin to guess what was happening, Knowles found himself pinned from behind by the stocky crewman.

"For God's sake, man," he said, wincing, "what in the hell do you think you're doing ...?"

"Me?" Bledsoe was incredulous. "What the hell were you doing?"

Knowles looked up, then ... and saw, directly in front of him, the main panel of the sensor web—or what was left of it. Someone had gone at it with a vengeance, splintering the metal, destroying many of the readouts, smashing the organic memory chips. Knowles lost his breath. He looked at the sensors, at the length of the steel which only moments ago he had held in his hands ... and he went pale, with horror.

"Oh, my God," he said, softly.

"No."

The doors to the bridge hissed open, admitting Jacinda and Archer, both awakened by the sounds of the struggle. Jacinda's eyes widened in disbelief.

"Mr. Bledsoe! What the hell is going on here?"

Bledsoe told her: how he'd been awakened by hell's own noise coming from the bridge; how he'd found Knowles, rod in hand, flailing away at the sensor web. Archer was already at the board, checking the extent of the damage; Jacinda looked at Knowles with a mixture of incredulity and resignation. "Donald?" she said. "Do you

*"Since time began
we've walked
among you, sharing
your triumphs, your
despair. But now
there's nothing. No
children; no future.
Just a ruined
playground you left
behind."*

... deny this?"

Knowles felt utterly helpless. "I ... I don't remember, Jacinda. I don't remember any of it. The last thing I recall is going to sleep in my cabin, and when I woke up, I ... He let the sentence hang; even incomplete, it was damning.

Jacinda looked betrayed. "Oh, Donald. How could you do this to—she amended herself quickly—"us?"

"Jacinda, no! It was *them*, Jacinda, don't you see? It was *them*."

"He's crazy!" Bledsoe snapped, "I told you he was—"

"Mr. Bledsoe, kindly *shut up*." Jacinda's tone was cold and terse. She folded her arms across her chest, faced with one of the most difficult decisions of her life; she shut her eyes, briefly, as she weighed her options, and when she opened them, fought to keep her voice calm and measured. "Mr. Archer! Damage to sensor web?"

"The backups are working fine, but some of the finer spectro functions are impaired. We'll need at least a day's layover at a repair facility, maybe two. Outpost Twelve, in the Centaurus system, is closest."

Jacinda nodded to herself. "Then raise Central and tell them"—she hesitated only a moment—"tell them we're returning Dr. Knowles to Outpost Twelve. Medical emergency. Arrange for a shuttle to connect him with the next available commercial flight back to Galthor."

She looked at Knowles, sadly. "Donald ... effective immediately, you're ... confined to quarters. I'm sorry."

"Jacinda," Knowles said, imploringly, "I swear to God, it wasn't *me*."

But if Jacinda made any reply, Knowles did not hear it as Bledsoe hurried him through the door and off the bridge.

Angry, humiliated, Knowles kept silent as Bledsoe ushered him down the long corridor to his cabin; the crewman smiled an unpleasant little smile. "This may surprise you, Professor," he said, "but ... I almost believe that *wasn't* you on the bridge." Knowles looked at him, startled and hopeful.

"The look in your eyes when we were fighting?" Bledsoe said. "Like a sleepwalker. And how you kept at it, hardly feeling any pain ... I don't know ... you may be telling the truth, at that. Except ... A nasty smile: "... I don't really care if you are."

Knowles's anger doubled in intensity; he wrestled free of Bledsoe's grip, stopped. "You son of a bitch!"

Bledsoe just smirked. "Look at the bright side," he said cheerfully. "Another week and you'll be back in civilization, on a comfortable star liner, instead of spending the next month and a half on mining vessels and survey ships. You don't really belong out here, Professor."

Knowles started. Back to civilization ...?

Bledsoe took him by the arm again, trying to make him move on, but suddenly, it all started to make sense. Back to civilization. Yes, of course. Damn them, of course. Knowles wrested free of Bledsoe and, oblivious to all else, began to move in the opposite direction, his face red with rage. "*Damn them*," he said to himself, "*damn them to hell*."

Bledsoe rushed after. "Goddamn it, come back—"

He grabbed Knowles; Knowles, in a fury—at him, at the apparitions, at the humiliation and hurt he had suffered—grabbed back. He dug his fingers in to the metallic fabric of Bledsoe's tunic, gave him a violent shove backward, into the wall. Bledsoe, unprepared for the attack, staggered

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back; Knowles pressed the advantage, grabbed him again, and deliberately slammed the back of Bledsoe's head into the hull. Bledsoe slumped to the floor, and within seconds, Knowles was on his way to the airlock.

He suited up, scrambled down the ladder extended along one of the ship's tripod legs, and hurried away, out of the park, into the ruins of Manhattan. Even if Bledsoe recovered consciousness immediately, Knowles reasoned, he could lose himself amid the decaying buildings for hours, until, inevitably, they found him. No matter. If he didn't find what he was looking for in that time, he might as well be found.

He couldn't return to Penn Station—it would be the first place Jacinda would look—and instead sought out the music store in which he first saw Blaine and the other apparitions. That, of course, would be the second place Jacinda would look, so if they were not there, he'd best leave quickly.

He stood outside the store, enraged, shouting blindly into the sallow darkness: "Cowards! Liars! Show yourselves! I dare you! I dare you to face me!"

Silence. Knowles yelled at the top of his voice:

"Goddamn you, show yourselves!"

Slowly, the yellow air around him congealed . . . sculpted, as by some invisible hand, into the shell of a human being, blank at first, featureless, then refining itself into the face and form of the young man, Blaine. Knowles stepped back, both fascinated and frightened by the materialization.

Blaine just looked at Knowles, sadly. "Go back your ship, Professor," he sighed. "You might as well."

"Because if I don't," Knowles said, his anger returning, "you'll just take over my body and make me go . . . won't you?"

"That's right."

Knowles could not remember ever being so enraged. "You lied to me. You wanted me to make a fool of myself . . . wanted me to be shipped back to civilization! And you—you'd come with me, wouldn't you?"

Other specters began to appear on the empty street, drawing upon the

roiling gases for their physical substance. Blaine seemed almost apologetic. "Please understand, Professor . . . there's no other way. We can't travel through warp space in this form, but in yours—that's a different matter. I can serve as a beacon for the others, showing them the way."

"And me?" Knowles said. "What happens to me, my body, when you're done with it?"

Blaine looked uncertain. "I'm . . . not sure. I have to merge myself, completely, with your body, to weather the journey . . . I . . . I'll try to leave it, once we're there, but—"

"But you don't know if you can?"

A deep rumble sounded. There was a soft drumming on the hull of the spacecraft. Jacinda looked up. Outside, a yellow rain was pouring down onto the parched, dry Earth.

"Please," Blaine said, softer now, "just try to understand. We just want to reclaim our future, that's all, our—"

"Your future!" Knowles shouted. "You don't deserve a future! Any of you!"

A murmur rose from the specters around him; Knowles spun round to face them, his voice ragged, accusing.

"We may have fled the Earth, once it became uninhabitable, but you—you were the ones who made it that way! You could've saved it, you could've done something, every one of you—but you didn't! Did you?"

The apparitions looked down, his words hitting uncomfortably close to home. "How many of you," Knowles accused, "thought you'd be on one of those starships, fleeing the dying Earth? How many of you thought you'd escape . . . but died before you could?"

A murmur of guilt, shame, and misery ran through the crowd. Blaine, alarmed, stepped up, took Knowles by the shoulders. "What you say may be true . . . but it's over and done with, long ago. There's nothing we can do about it now."

Knowles shook him off. "Isn't

there?" he said. "You changed the air in that train station from methane to oxygen. From poisonous to breathable."

Blaine started. A few cries of agreement came from the crowd; Blaine, nervous, tried to quell the rising sentiment. "That was different! A small, controllable environment. We couldn't—"

"Why not? These . . . astral forms of yours. They're energy, aren't they, energy that once worked in synergy with biological mechanisms? If you merge those energies with the environment—"

"You're talking about a planetary scale!" Blaine shouted. "Even if we could do it, we might lose our awareness, our consciousness—"

Knowles stared him down.

"Like you propose to do to me?" he said.

Blaine was silent, as were the others. Knowles surveyed the crowd with contempt. "Cowards. You're still the same bloody cowards who let this planet die. Aren't you?"

He turned abruptly, began to stalk angrily away, called after:

"Go ahead. Take my body . . . my life . . . to save your own. At least when my time comes, I'll know that I can die with a hell of a lot more courage, and dignity, than any of you!"

He did not look back. He walked to the end of the block, turned the corner, and leaned up against the wall of a building for several moments, wondering if they would take control of him now; but of course they didn't. Why possess him now, then risk exposure should Blaine say the wrong thing, exhibit some uncharacteristic mannerism, while in control of Knowles's body? No; they would let him walk the last mile alone. He didn't know if he was grateful for that, or not. He straightened, oriented himself, struck off down the street, and headed for Penn Station—where Jacinda and the others were doubtless waiting for him.

Knowles lay on his bunk, eyes shut, feeling strangely at peace. The ship's engines were vibrating subtly, in preparation for liftoff; he had lain awake here for hours, remembering all that he could of his life, his work, his friends, before that moment came when he would no longer be able to remember anything. His anger was spent; his only hope now was that when Blaine took over his body, his own spirit would fly free, free to be with his Cara again.

The door buzzed; Knowles opened his eyes. "Come in," he said. The door

slid open, and Jacinda—looking awkward and pained—entered. She went to his side; Knowles remained where he was.

"I thought you should know," she said quietly. "I told Central you requested a ... medical leave. Stress reaction to space travel; it's not uncommon." She paused, then added, "I ... haven't logged your actions, last night."

Knowles sat up, touched by this. "I appreciate that," he said. "How will you, uh, explain the sensor board?" Jacinda smiled wearily. "I'll think of something." She studied him, noticing the difference in his face and in his manner. "You're looking better. Rested."

Knowles smiled wryly. "Yes. You might say I'm ... expecting to be a new man, once we leave this planet." Then, in a soft voice: "Jacinda ... if I should, by any chance, not ... see you again, after this ... I just want you to know how ... how sorry I am, for all that's happened. I know I've disappointed you. I only hope I haven't betrayed you, as well."

She looked at him with wide, moist eyes. "Donald—you don't—"

"And I want you to know," he went on, "that I'm grateful for the chance you gave me. And for your friendship. And for—"

A deep rumble interrupted him, and for a moment, Knowles thought that the engines were firing up; but it sound different, somehow, and by the way Jacinda was rushing to the port, it was not a usual sound. "What was that?" she said, peering out the viewport.

Knowles suddenly identified the sound. "It ... sounded like ... thunder."

Jacinda turned away from the port. "Impossible. This atmosphere's at equilibrium—there can't be any meteorological activity at all, much less—"

There was a soft drumming on the hull of the spacecraft; Knowles looked up, listening to it increase in intensity, thinking suddenly of autumns spent with Cara in their cabin in the northwest, of falling to sleep with that sound, that selfsame drumming on the roof. Jacinda looked up too; recognizing the impossible, unmistakable sound of—

"Rain," Knowles said, wonderingly. "It's—raining ..."

Jacinda spun round to face the viewport again.

Outside, a yellow rain was pouring down onto the parched, dry Earth.

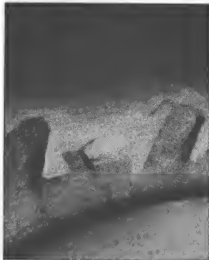
They rushed to the bridge,

Knowles's confinement to quarters suddenly forgotten, and burst in as a baffled Archer and Bledsoe sat, wide-eyed, before the sensors. Jacinda hurried up behind Archer, scanning his readouts with disbelief. "Is that really rain?" she said.

Archer nodded dully. "Not just water, either, but ... amino acids. Nutrients, raining into the—"

"Good God," Jacinda, Knowles and Archer turned to see a white-faced Bledsoe frantically checking and re-checking his instruments. "I ... I'm getting—life-form readings. In the oceans."

Knowles's heart skipped a beat.



Jacinda elbowed Archer aside, taking over his instruments, shaking her head in disbelief. "This is insane," she said, punching up readout after readout. "It takes thousands of years for even the simplest life-forms to develop—"

"It's as if something is ... accelerating evolution, somehow," Archer said. "As if—"

"This can't be right!" Bledsoe snapped. "Maybe the sensors are out of alignment after yesterday's—"

"They're fine," Archer countered, "we ran three separate systems checks not half an hour a—"

Knowles stared at the viewscreen, at the downpour washing New York City in its first rainfall in a millenium, and a smile came to him, slowly ...

"My God," Jacinda whispered. She hesitated, staring at her instruments, then said quietly: "The oceans are swarming with ... cyanobacteria."

Knowles rushed excitedly to Jacinda's side. "Are you sure?"

Bledsoe looked at them blankly. "Cyno—what?"

Knowles straightened, looked at Bledsoe, and allowed himself a satisfied smile.

"Cyanobacteria," he explained, "were the first complex organisms to evolve on the Earth. They led the way for all life-forms to come ... including us." He turned back to Jacinda. "Well?"

Jacinda leaned back, stared at her instruments a long moment ... then looked up at Knowles, and sighed. "Well yourself, Donald. I don't pretend to understand what's happening, but ... there's obviously more going on on this planet than we suspected."

"Than some of us suspected," Knowles corrected.

Jacinda smiled wanly. "Yes. Some of us." She swiveled in her seat, turned to her crew. "Mr. Archer, Mr. Bledsoe ... log the data on the emerging life-forms and transmit them to Central. I have no idea what the hell is going on, but it would appear ... Her smile grew broader. "... that we are out of a job."

Knowles stood on one of the middle rungs of the ladder, staring up into a sky beginning to clear of dust and rust; the yellow light seemed paler, the horizon streaked with traces of green as the wounded atmosphere began to regain some semblance of its former strength. The rain continued, running down the glass visor of Knowles' environment suit, washing the centuries from the ruined city, even as it did the rest of the planet. It was raining everywhere on Earth, from the arctic to the tropics, from Asia to South America; and Knowles suspected that it would not stop for a long time to come.

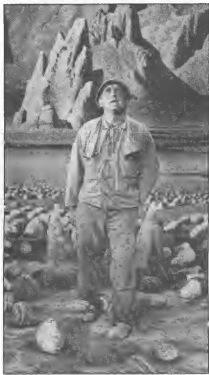
Knowles looked into the lightening sky for many minutes, not knowing if those he sought were even capable of hearing him any longer. But nevertheless they were here. They were here in every drop of water, in every roll of thunder, in every flash of lightning and every tiny organism fighting for life in the reborn oceans. They would always be here. And no matter what strange new life-forms would emerge—carbon-based, silicon-based, whatever wondrous combination of molecules would occur on this resurrected planet—Knowles knew one thing for certain.

"We'll be back," he promised, as another peal of thunder shook the city. "Someday. We'll be back ..."

He climbed up the ladder and into the ship, and, soon after, the ship was gone. For the Earth, the long night was over; and if she knew what strange dawn was about to break, she kept her counsel, and remained silent; silent as the dead.

SCIENCE FICTION IN THE TWILIGHT ZONE

by Marc Scott Zicree



I think it's important to understand that in the life of one of the more significant guys of the mid-twentieth century, this science fiction series was a kind of life raft, an escape hatch. It was an arena for self-expression such as he was no longer able to enjoy with the demise of the live anthology shows on television." So said Rod Serling's close friend, producer Dick Berg, of *The Twilight Zone*. But when I wrote my book *The Twilight Zone Companion*, I was forced to confront the question, "Was *The Twilight Zone* truly a science-fiction show?" The answer I came up with, with qualifications, was no.

Rod Serling was born in 1924, and in the three decades prior to the debut of *The Twilight Zone* in 1959, the world he lived in had seen immense technological change, from the Model T and crystal set to Sputnik and the Bomb. He'd grown up reading *Amazing Stories* and was knowledgeable about the published sf of his day (recruiting Ray Bradbury, Richard Matheson, and Charles Beaumont to write for his show; he also tried unsuccessfully to buy stories from Arthur C. Clarke, Robert Heinlein, and Phillip K. Dick). But Serling himself—who wrote ninety-two of the hundred fifty-six episodes of the original series—was not a science fiction writer, nor did he have any ambitions in that area. Throughout the late forties and early fifties, he'd labored to produce socially-conscious works about the real world, but had been constantly daunted by network and sponsor censorship. Of his 1956 political drama "The Arena," he wrote, "In retrospect, I probably would have had a much more adult play had I made it science fiction, put it in the year 2057, and peopled it with robots." Like many before him, Serling chose to

drape realistic stories in the trappings of fantasy in order to get his message across. These stories were parables, not to be taken literally. And whether or not any of them could really happen was beside the point.

In truth, *The Twilight Zone* explored the full spectrum of fantasy, ranging from the occult on one side to science fiction on the other. But unlike a pure science fiction show such as *Outer Limits*, where there was always some attempt to provide a plausible (if far-fetched) scientific rationale for the proceedings, in *The Twilight Zone* any wild idea was allowed so long as it provided a satisfying story. If pseudo-scientific explanations fit in, fine. If not, never mind.

A good illustration of this is that, of the eleven *Twilight Zone* episodes involving time travel, only four ("Execution," "Back There," "Once Upon a Time," and "No Time Like the Past") utilize time machines. In "The Odyssey

of Flight 33," a "freak tailwind" is the culprit. The rest generally involve characters turning a corner and abruptly finding themselves in the past, with no attempt to explain just how this has occurred. Another example can be found in the show's various telepathy stories. In "Mute," the psychic child is the product of a decades-long experiment, but in "Penny for Your Thoughts," the mind-reading bank teller gets his abilities as a result of a coin landing on edge. And sometimes, a story would begin as science fiction and transform into fantasy, such as in Richard Matheson's chilling "Death Ship," where we open with three astronauts routinely examining an alien planet only to discover in the end that they are all ghosts doomed to relive the same event forever.

Of the one hundred fifty-six episodes, less than a third can be characterized as science fiction, dealing with such elements as space travel, robots, close encounters, and parallel dimensions. Then there are a handful of marginal episodes that have science fiction themes but are set entirely in the real world, such as "The Shelter," where a group of neighbors turn ugly when they fear nuclear war is imminent, and "Where Is Everybody?" where an astronaut-trainee in an isolation tank hallucinates he's the last man on earth.

Whether or not *The Twilight Zone* was primarily a science fiction show, it was perceived as such, both by the general public and by science fiction fandom. During its five-year run, the show won three Hugos, during years that Hugos also went to *Starship Troopers*, *A Canticle For Leibowitz*, *Stranger in a Strange Land*, and "Flowers for Algernon." True, some of

(continued on page 94)

MAD CITY

(continued from page 50)

now.

SHIGHT:

The city dazzles with light, bleaching out the night sky.

They're mad, both of them, all our people will be killed. I've got to stop the dreams ... stop them ...

The city dazzles. Water flows in torrents through the canals, waves rise and clash above the canal walls, spread sheets of water over stone roadways. Phosphor lighting blazes in archways, glows around windows and doors, dances from a hundred, two hundred light globes hovering above the canals. The light globes pulse, they bob and weave to a thrumming rhythm that shakes the city's walls and roads and waterways.

Egg-shaped vessels erupt from the canal waters, seventy or eighty shells of metal emitting green sparks and yellow bursts of flame. The vessels rise and fall, shunt from side to side, carom off the building walls. Streaks of electric red arc from them, burn holes in stone, in metal and glass.

Metal gates withdraw from windows, and large creatures (the dark, massive-limbed beasts from earlier dreams?) encased in armor appear, wielding large tubes connected to massive canisters with arrays of flexible hoses.

Sheets of regulated flame burst from the cylinders, aimed at the egg-shaped vessels. One of the vessels is struck full on, and explodes into a storm of a thousand self-propelled disks. The disks scatter sparks and smoke, spin and dart chaotically through the air, striking stone or metal or armor with muffled explosions.

Below, the ground opens periodically to release bundles of serpent-like cords of shimmering metal that whip through the air emitting high-pitched whistles, cracking across the vessels or about the legs of the armored creatures in the windows. From side tunnels emerge several columns of glowing pyramids rolling over the ground on individual carts. Bubbles of glowing liquid pop from the pyramids and soar through the air, vanishing when they strike a solid surface.

The ground and the walls continue to shake, and the air fills with smoke,

with dancing lights and spinning disks, with sheets of flame and whistling cables and the popping of tiny explosions, with cries and screams and crashes and the dazzling kaleidoscope of color ...

No...!

4

Tory and Armand stood silently above Shight's huddled form. Lips and cheeks on all three had begun to crack and blister. Tory swayed slightly, fighting to keep her eyes open, but Armand remained steady and motionless, fingers gripped tightly around the hilt of his knife.



"He's blocking again," Armand said. His voice was harsh and dry. "Consciously or not, doesn't matter. I have to use this." He held up the knife. When Tory didn't respond, he said, "It was the pain that did it before."

Tory nodded. "Just don't kill him. I think we can do it without his dreams, but we need his power."

"I won't kill him. Not yet."

Shight, eyes closed and trembling, lay curled in the sand, fingers clawing gently at the ground. A fine dust covered his face, lined the split skin. Whimpering sounds emerged from the swollen, cracked lips; not a word was intelligible.

Armand knelt beside him, drew back the knife, then plunged it into Shight's arm.

Shight screamed, jerked away his arm, the knife still embedded in it. Armand grabbed for the knife hilt, caught it. He wrenched the knife free of Shight's arm, hesitated a moment, then drove it deep into Shight's thigh.

Shight screamed again and rolled away from Armand, flailing his arms and legs, rolled away from the stones and out into the open desert, blood

spattering the glaring sand.

Armand looked at the bloody knife in his hand for a moment, then started out after Shight. Tory grabbed his arm, jerked him violently back into the shade, throwing him hard against a tall boulder. Armand, panting, stared out at Shight, who was tossing back and forth, moaning and crying out at the sky and sand.

Armand turned away, held up his empty hand, looked closely at it. He placed it against the boulder, palm up. Armand raised the knife, held it still for a few moments, then quickly plunged the blade into his hand, driving the tip through skin and muscle and bone until it scraped against the hot, hard surface of the glittering rock.

ARMAND:

Red on white on white on red ...

The spinning heart of a sun, a red sun, a white sun ...

Pain everywhere, driving, lifting me.

Steam from the heart, glistening water. Steam and then heavier droplets, coalescing, cooling.

Blood flows like water, like pain ...

Water in the air, in cool tunnels. The canals, the deep underground pools. The cool water flowing, circling and circling.

Webs of steel, webs of crystal, webs of water, all meeting, all one, interconnected, circling, separating and joining, flowing with cool darkness. Stone the guide, the mover closing in, opening away.

Canals of the city, one single canal, one single, deep reservoir. A hundred canals, a thousand all one in the web of crystal and stone.

Now, Tory, bring it up, it's there, we can do it. Take my pain, draw it and use it to draw the water ... it's all there, yes, it's all ...

TORY:

Something terrible is happening, I don't know how much time I'll have to make this entry, or any others.

The desert is sinking all around us.

Explosions rock the air, and vast tracts of sand and rock erupt from the desert floor, hurtle into the sky to fall back to the earth, far away. Already hills of sand are forming in the distance from the erupting sand even as an enormous crater is being chaotically excavated all around us. Our stand of boulders, though, has remained untouched.

We are nearly in the center of the growing crater, and as more and more sand is blasted out (by what enormous machines or forces?), I can see our

MAD CITY

group of rocks forms the crown of a solid, massive pillar of etched stone.

Only Armand and I remain on the pillar. Shight was still out on the open sand when the loud rumblings and explosions began. But he, too, has been spared the erupting sand, almost as if he is being protected, and I can still see him now, far below us on his spot of calm sand, gradually sinking further from us with the rest of the desert. He lies on his back, eyes open and staring at the sun, limbs motionless. But I can see he is still alive, for he smiles on occasion, or squeezes shut his eyes as if in pain.

New, more muffled explosions. A

fountain of sand flows up from the desert, high, high into the air, arcing out toward the still-growing dunes and hills forming a ring two or three kilometers out from this pillar. Now another fountain . . . and a third . . . four . . . five . . . now seven. Incredible, the sand flows as if through enormous, invisible curved tubes. The sand sparkles and glitters in the midday sun, a beautiful sight.

Stonework has begun to appear, perhaps towers or high walls of the city Shight babbled about. The late afternoon sun casts long shadows. It appears Shight was right, at least in part. Have we awakened this city? We've awakened something, and without bringing up any water. There is nothing we can do now but wait.

Sand still flows out through the seven marvelous fountains, and the crater deepens, widens. Here among the stones at the top of our pillar, perched above the growing city, all is relatively

calm. Armand, silent and immobile, watches the excavation, the gradual exposure of a long buried treasure. Below, Shight is still visible, but I can no longer make out his face he is so far away now. Probably he is dead, lying out in the blazing sun with no water. Armand and I will be, too, if water does not appear soon.

Stone walls and smooth, flat roofs are becoming exposed, and what look like archways between buildings. The sand now moves in rivers between walls and other prominences, flowing towards the seven fountains that draw it up into the air and hurl it out towards the rising hills. Sporadic explosions still sound, and sinkholes appear briefly through the city. Yes, it is definitely a city, buried for so long, now excavating itself from the sand. An ancient city. But is it human, or alien. Does it matter?

SHIGHT:

You are mad, ancient city.

BY WHAT STANDARDS?

The standards of my people. Human standards.

YOU, TOO, ARE MAD BY THOSE STANDARDS.

Probably. I even believe I'm communicating with an ancient city.

YOU ARE.

That belief, certainly, would qualify me for madness. It's a label I gladly accept.

WE UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER.

I don't know. I should be dead.

I AM KEEPING YOU ALIVE.

Why?

THE POWER IN YOU.

WHERE ARE YOUR PEOPLE? YOUR CITIES?

No. You'll send your monsters out after them. You'll destroy them all.

WHAT MONSTERS?

Images rise in my head: the large, dark creatures, naked or encased in armor; the cone fliers; the rolling pyramids; the egg-shaped vessels hurtling through the air; the flames and smoke and cries and explosions.

YOU MISUNDERSTAND.

Do I?

YES. SELF-AMUSEMENT, ONLY. TO PASS THE TIME. I HAVE BEEN STRANDED HERE FOR CENTURIES.

More images rise in my mind, this time evoked by the city: a vast ship glowing against a background of night and stars, hurtling through space; a world appearing (this one!), the ship entering the atmosphere, landing at the side of a huge, blue lake surrounded by trees and lush vegetation; strange, shimmering bipedal beings disembark-



"Mr. Hargrove, the late Mr. Stevens is here to see you."

ing from the ship, and dying one by one at the water's edge.

You have a ship?

I AM THE SHIP. I BUILT THE CITY AROUND ME. RATHER, I CREATED THE WORKERS WHO BUILT THE CITY FOR ME. WHO THEN POPULATED IT. KEPT ME AMUSED UNTIL A STILL UNKNOWN DISASTER STRUCK. DEACTIVATED ME. BURIED ME.

Why couldn't you leave? You obviously have vast resources or power, materials.

I NEED GUIDANCE. NAVIGATORS. LIVING BEINGS WITH A CERTAIN ... POWER. Me.

YOU HAD THE POWER TO AWAKEN ME. YOU HAVE THE CAPACITY TO GUIDE ME THROUGH THE STARS.

New images again: myself inside the ship, enclosed in a clear, liquid-filled capsule, emerald bubbles percolating through the liquid amid the numerous tubes connected to my body and the network of wires attached to my head. My eyes are open, but I cannot move. Perhaps I will never move again.

No.

I MUST ADMIT, IF I REMAIN STRANDED, I WILL HAVE TO FIND AMUSEMENT AGAIN. PERHAPS I WILL SEND OUT MY "MONSTERS" TO FIND NEW SOURCES.

Why not just take me? I'm helpless, dying, you could force me into your ship, into you, into that ... capsule.

ONE OF THE NAVIGATORS MUST BE A VOLUNTEER.

One? How many do you need?

TWO WITH THE POWER. I NEED ONE OF THE OTHERS.

Pictures of Armand and Tory appear. Is there any real choice, for either part of this?

I will do it. I give myself to you, willingly, if you take this one. Armand's image.

DONE. YES, MAD ONE, WE UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER.

5

The sun had nearly set. On the opposite horizon, a moon had just begun to rise, a pale, pink light in the dark blue sky.

Tory and Armand knelt on the edges of their perch, high above the city now almost completely exposed below them. Sand still flowed out of the city, but many of the canals were cleared and now filling with water.

"Look," Tory whispered. "Water."

Armand nodded.

"We should climb down to it, before we're too weak."

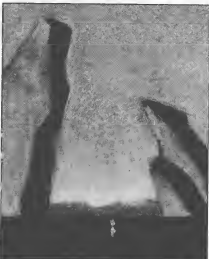
"Maybe," Armand said. "Look down there?" He pointed to a section of cleared stone between two wide canals.

Part of the stone bed was moving,

sliding back to reveal a large, dark cavern. A moment later a figure emerged from the cavern, and was followed by a dozen others.

The creatures were large and dark, with massive limbs and gold eyes that glowed from huge, misshapen heads. When all of them had emerged from the cavern, they began to march along the side of the canal, headed towards the pillar.

The pillar rose above the center of a large, open square, towering above the city. Tory and Armand leaned over its edge and watched as the group of creatures moved quickly along the canals until they were directly below,



halted at the base of the pillar. After some hesitation, they moved away, and went directly to Shight's body, which lay on a section of soft sand in a corner of the square.

Four of the creatures surrounded the body, then gently lifted it from the ground. An opening appeared in a nearby wall. The four creatures carried Shight's body through it, and the opening behind them.

The other creatures, nine in number, returned to the pillar. They gazed up along the numerous ledges, outcroppings and wide crevices, up at the perch above, and began to climb.

ARMAND:

Doomed.

Night will not save us, will not hide us. We have no protection other than this knife. Not nearly enough.

But I will not let them take me. I will not go without a fight. I will go down, but I'll kill as many of them as I can before they kill me.

I will meet death with death.

TORY:

Final entry, certainly. I can only

hope this recording will be found, that it will be of some use to those who follow.

Huge, monstrous creatures have carried Shight's body away, and now climb the pillar, coming for us. The sun has just set, the sky is a dull orange glow blending to a darker blue, and I can see the dark forms of the creatures more than halfway up, climbing steadily.

Armand crouches in a cleft between rocks, knife ready. He will go down fighting. I will not.

Final entry ... closed.

So it was not the final entry. I don't know what is happening here. I have been spared. But spared for what?

Armand is gone. He is, I assume, still alive, but not free.

The creatures reached our perch, came over the edge, and completely ignored me, though I was prepared to accept death or capture at their hands. Instead, they headed directly for Armand.

It was over quickly. His knife was worthless, and they overpowered him easily. They did not hurt him, though one did inject him with something that immediately calmed him. Apparently they want him alive. And then, again ignoring me, they descended the pillar and disappeared into the city, taking Armand with them.

I am alone.

I need water, desperately, but do I dare go into the city? How much longer can I wait?

Lights have appeared all over the city, and I can see most of it now. The air is quiet, the sand fountains no longer in existence. Water runs freely in the canals, reflecting the lights shining down from above. Ninety percent or more of the city is clear of sand, only a few spots on the outskirts still partially buried. Apparently it is enough for whoever is now running the city.

I will not last through the night; certainly not through the day tomorrow. I must descend soon, and risk confrontation with the creatures. There is all that water below, and it is waiting for me.

Something new. A loud, tremendous vibration shakes the earth, rocks this pillar and the entire city. I feel as if the pillar will crumble beneath me at any moment.

The lights of the city pulse now, dimming rhythmically, then brightening.

The vibration increases, grows louder. I've backed away from the edge, afraid of toppling over, but I can

MAD CITY

still see the city below. The roar fills my ears (surely it is filling this recording), and I can hardly talk.

An explosion. Another. Two more, louder. A tremendous cavity is forming in the ground, not far from the pillar. Walls and towers are collapsing all around it, falling into it, and the huge, black opening grows. More explosions, sending sand and stone and water into the air.

Something appears in the opening, so large it nearly fills it with its bulk. It begins to rise from below ground, slowly, slowly. Metal, shiny in spots but dusted with sand and rock. Yes, metal. An enormous machine or vessel ... rising ... rising...

A ship? A spaceship? It's rising still, rising above the ground with no support, with nothing beneath it but swirling sandstorms laced with streams of steaming water. It *must* be a spaceship.

The ship glows a dark green, pulsing with the rhythm of the pulsing lights of the city. It is disk-shaped, but enormous, large enough to carry hundreds of people, perhaps thousands. Could it be a ship of our ancestors? I will probably never know.

Below it, hundreds, thousands of strange creatures begin to pour out from beneath the city, emerging from the cavity the ship left behind—the large dark creatures that took Armand; tiny, furred quadrupeds scurrying about with helmets and sparking sticks; showers of glowing, bird-like animals fluttering through the air, emitting smoke; massive, flying serpents; and more, more all the time. They all seem to be fighting each other.

I have no chance. The city is complete madness.

I will certainly die up here without water, but I will not descend into that violent death below me.

It no longer seems to matter. I was ready before. I am ready now.

Above, the ship continues to rise into the night.

I wait.

SHIGHT:

Deactivate them. Deactivate them all. You have what you wanted. You have the other one, and you have me.

THEY WILL PROBABLY NEVER LEAVE

THE CITY. WITH NO ONE TO REPAIR OR RECREATE THEM, EVENTUALLY THEY WILL DESTROY EACH OTHER, FALL APART. THEY WILL PROBABLY NEVER FIND YOUR PEOPLE.

Deactivate them all, or you will not have me any longer.

ALL RIGHT.

THERE, IT IS DONE. I WILL MISS

THEM.

You are mad.

YES, OF COURSE.

Then, to the stars.

YES, TO THE STARS!

6

The lights of the city slowly began to dim as the ship rose rapidly and

Blood flows like water, like rain . . . webs of steel, of crystal, of water all meeting, all interconnected, circling, separating and joining, flowing with a cool darkness.

disappeared into the night. The creatures in the city slowed their frantic activity, began to stumble or veer in flight, jerk spasmodically, and eventually come to a halt. Those that had been flying plummeted to the earth or into the waters of the canals. Those already on the ground collapsed. All remained motionless as the city lights continued to fade until they were completely dark.

The city was silent.

The city was now lit by the full, pale moon rising above the desert. The woman at the top of the pillar watched the motionless figures below her for a long time, then began to descend.

When she reached the ground, she staggered to the nearest canal and drank from it—just a little at first, then deeply. She cupped water in her hands, tossed it over her head, then over her clothes. After several minutes she drank again, then rose to her feet.

For a long time she remained motionless, eyes open and unblinking. Then, guided by the moon above her, the woman set off to explore the ruins of the dead, mad city. ■

DELTA

(continued from page 63)

real and the illusory were undifferentiated. And at the center of this complex circumstance—a bulky, sweating monster—stood Moon. Innocent, perhaps. But guilty of a seminal crime.

"I can make it good for you," he said. "Hawaii ... you want duty in Hawaii, I can arrange it. Hell, I can get you shipped Stateside."

He struck me then as a hideous genie offering three wishes, and the fact that he had the power to make his offer infuriated me. "If you can do all that," I said, "you ain't got a worry in the world." And I strode off, feeling righteous in my judgment.

Two nights later while returning to my hooch, I spotted a couple of men wearing tiger shorts dragging a large and apparently unconscious someone toward the barrier of concertina wire beside the PX—I knew it had to be Moon. I drew my pistol, sneaked along the back wall of the PX, and when they came abreast I stepped out and told them to put their burden down. They stopped but didn't turn loose of Moon. Both had blackened their faces with greasepaint, and to this had added fanciful designs in crimson, blue, and yellow that gave them the look of savages. They carried combat knives, and their eyes were pointed with the reflected brilliance of the perimeter lights. It was a hot night, but it seemed hotter there beside them, as if their craziness had a radiant value. "This ain't none of your affair, Curt," said the tallest of the two; despite his bad grammar, he had a soft, well-modulated voice, and I thought I heard a trace of amusement in it.

I peered at him, but was unable to recognize him beneath the paint. Again I told them to put Moon down.

"Sorry," said the tall guy. "Man's gotta pay for his crimes."

He didn't do anything," I said. "You know damn well Randall's just AWOL."

The tall guy chuckled, and the other guy said, "Naw, we don't know that a-tall."

Moon groaned, tried to lift his head, then slumped back.

"No matter what he did or didn't do," said the tall guy, "the man

deserves what's comin'."

"Yeah," said his pal. "And if it ain't us what does it, it'll be somebody else."

I knew he was right, and the idea of killing two men to save a third who was doomed in any event just didn't stack up. But though my sense of duty was weak where Moon was concerned, it hadn't entirely dissipated. "Let him go," I said.

The tall guy grinned, and the other one shook his head as if dismayed by my stubbornness. They appeared wholly untroubled by the pistol, possessed of an irrational confidence. "Be reasonable Curt," said the tall guy. "This ain't gettin' you nowhere."

I couldn't believe his foolhardiness. "You see this?" I said, flourishing the pistol. "Gun, y'know? I'm gonna fuckin' shoot you with it, you don't let him go."

Moon let out another groan, and the tall guy rapped him hard on the back of the head with the hilt of his knife.

"Hey!" I said, training the pistol at his chest.

"Look here, Curt . . ." he began.

"Who the hell are you?" I stepped closer, but was still unable to identify him. "I don't know you."

"Randall told us 'bout you, Curt. He's a buddy of ours, ol' Randall is. We're with Delta Sly Honey."

I believed him for that first split second. My mouth grew cottony, and my hand trembled. But then I essayed a laugh.

"Sure you are! Now put his ass down!"

"That's what you really want, huh?"

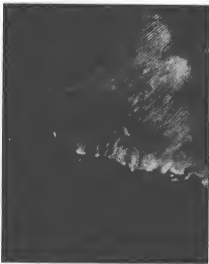
"Damn right!" I said. "Now!"

"Okay," he said. "You got it." And with a fluid stroke, he cut Moon's throat.

Moon's eyes popped open as the knife sliced through his tissues, and that—not the blood spilling onto the dust—was the thing that froze me: those bugged eyes in which an awful realization dawned and faded. They let him fall face downward. His legs spasmed, his right hand jittered. For a long moment, stunned, I stared at him, at the blood puddling beneath his head, and when I looked up I found that the two men were sprinting away, about to round the curve of the hill. I couldn't bring myself to fire. Mixed in my thoughts were the knowledge that killing them served no purpose and the fear that my bullets would have no effect. I glanced left and right, behind

me, making sure that no one was watching, and then ran up the slope to my hooch.

Under my cot was a bottle of sour mash. I pulled it out and had a couple of drinks to steady myself; but steadiness was beyond me. I switched on a battery lamp and sat crosslegged, listening to the snores of my bunkmate. Lying on my duffel bag was an unfinished letter home, one I had begun nearly two weeks before; I doubted now I'd ever finish it. What would I tell my folks? That I had more or less sanctioned an execution? That I was losing my fucking mind? Usually I told them everything was fine, but after the



scene I had just witnessed, I felt I was forever past that sort of blithe invention. I switched off the lamp and lay in the dark, the bottle resting on my chest. I had a third drink, a fourth, and gradually lost both count and consciousness.

I had a week's R & R coming and I took it, hoping debauch would shore me up. But I spent much of that week attempting to justify my inaction in terms of the inevitable and the supernatural, and failing in that attempt. You see, now as then, if pressed for an opinion, I would tell you that what happened at Noc Linh was the sad consequence of a joke gone sour, of a war twisted into a demonic exercise. Everything was explicable in that wise. And yet it's conceivable that the supernatural was involved, that—as Randall had suggested—a little magic had seeped into the world. In Vietnam, with all its horror and strangeness, it was difficult to distinguish between the magical and the mundane, and it's possible that thousands of supernatural events went unnoticed as such, obscured by the poignancies of death and

fear, becoming quirky memories that years later might pass through your mind while you were washing the dishes or walking the dog, and give you a moment's pause, an eerie feeling that would almost instantly be ground away by the mills of the ordinary. But I'm certain that my qualification is due to the fact that I want there to have been some magic involved, anything to lessen my culpability, to shed a less damning light on the perversity and viciousness of my brothers-in-arms.

On returning to Noc Linh, I found that Randall had also returned. He claimed to be suffering from amnesia and would not admit to having made the broadcast that had triggered Moon's murder. The shrinks had decided that he was bucking for a Section Eight, had ordered him to put back on the corpse detail, and as before, Randall could be seen laboring beneath the tin-roofed shed, transferring the contents of body bags into aluminum coffins. On the surface, little appeared to have changed. But Randall had become a pariah. He was insulted and whispered about and shunned. Whenever he came near, necks would stiffen and conversations die. If he had offed Moon himself, he would have been cheered; but the notion that he had used his influence to have his dirty work jobbed out didn't accord with the prevailing concept of honorable vengeance. Though I tried not to, I couldn't help feeling badly toward him myself. It was weird. I would approach with the best of intentions, but by the time I reached him, my hackles would have risen and I would walk on in hostile silence, as if he were exuding a chemical that had evoked my contempt. I did get close enough to him, however, to see that the mad brightness was missing from his eyes; I had the feeling that all his brightness was missing, that whatever quality had enabled him to do his broadcasts had been sucked dry.

One morning as I was passing the PX, whose shiny surfaces reflected a dynamited white glare of sun, I noticed a crowd of men pressing through the front door, apparently trying to catch sight of something inside. I pushed through them and found one of canteen clerks—a lean kid with black hair and a wolfish face—engaged in beating Randall to a pulp. I pulled him off, threw him into a table, and knelt beside Randall, who had collapsed to the floor. His cheekbones were lumped and discolored; blood poured from his nose, trickled from his mouth. His eyes met mine, and I felt nothing from

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him: he seemed muffled, vibeless, as if heavily sedated.

"They out to get me, Curt," he mumbled.

All my sympathy for him was suddenly resurrected. "It's okay, man," I said. "Sooner or later, it'll blow over," I handed him my bandanna, and he dabbed ineffectually at the flow from his nose. Watching him, I recalled Moon's categorization of my motives for befriending him, and I understood now that my true motives had less to do with our relative social status than with my belief that he could be saved, that—after months of standing by helplessly while the unsalvageable marched to their fates—I thought I might be able to effect some small good work. This may seem altruistic to the point of naiveté, and perhaps it was, perhaps the brimstone oppressiveness of the war had from the residue of old sermons heard and disregarded provoked some vain Christian reflex; but the need was strong in me, nonetheless, and I realized that I had fixed on it as a prerequisite to my own salvation.

Randall handed back the bandanna.

na. "Ain't gonna blow over," he said. "Not with these guys."

I grabbed his elbow and hauled him to his feet. "What guys?"

He looked around as if afraid of eavedroppers. "Delta Sly Honey!"

"Christ, Randall! Come on." I tried to guide him toward the door, but he wrenched free.

"They out to get me! They say I crossed over and they took care of Moon for me ... and then I got away from 'em." He dug his fingers into my arm. "But I can't remember, Curt! I can't remember nothin'!"

My first impulse was to tell him to drop the amnesia act, but then I thought about the painted men who had scragged Moon; if they were after Randall, he was in big trouble. "Let's get you patched up," I said. "We'll talk about this later."

He gazed at me, dull and uncomprehending. "You gonna help me?" he asked in a tone of disbelief.

I doubted anyone could help him now, and maybe, I thought, that was also part of my motivation—the desire to know the good sin of honest failure. "Sure," I told him. "We'll figure out somethin'."

We started for the door, but on seeing the men gathered there, Randall balked. "What you want from me?" he shouted, giving a flailing, awkward wave with his left arm as if to make them vanish. "What the fuck you want?"

They stared coldly at him, and those stares were like bad answers. He hung his head and kept it hung all the way to the infirmary.

That night I set out to visit Randall, intending to advise him to confess, a tactic I perceived as his one hope of survival. I'd planned to see him early in the evening, but was called back on duty and didn't get clear until well after midnight. The base was quiet and deserted-feeling. Only a few lights picked out the darkened slopes, and had it not been for the heat and stench, it would have been easy to believe that the hill with its illuminated caves was a place of mild enchantment, inhabited by elves and not frightened men. The moon was almost full, and beneath it the PX shone like an immense silver lozenge. Though it had closed an hour before, its windows were lit, and—MP instincts engaged—I peered inside. Randall was backed against the bar, holding a knife to the neck of the wolfish clerk who had beaten him, and ranged in a loose circle around him, standing among the tables, were five men wearing tiger shorts, their faces painted with savage designs. I drew my pistol, eased around to the front and—wanting my entrance to have shock value—kicked the door open.

The five men turned their heads to me, but appeared not at all disconcerted. "How's she goin', Curt?" said one, and by his soft voice I recognized the tall guy who had slit Moon's throat.

"Tell 'em to leave me be!" Randall shrilled.

I fixed my gaze on the tall guy and with gunslinger menace said, "I'm not messin' with you tonight. Get out now or I'll take you down."

"You can't hurt me, Curt," he said.

"Don't give me that ghost shit! Fuck with me, and you'll be humpin' with Delta Sly Honey for real."

"Even if you were right 'bout me, Curt, I wouldn't be scared of dyin'. I was dead where it counts halfway through my tour."

A scuffling at the bar, and I saw that Randall had wrestled the clerk to the floor. He wrapped his legs around the clerk's waist in a scissors and yanked his head back by the hair to expose his throat. "Leave me be," he said. Every nerve in his face was jumping.

"Let him go, Randall," said the tall guy. "We ain't after no innocent blood. We just want to take a little walk ... to cross back over."

"Get out!" I told him.



"You're workin' yourself in real deep, man," he said.

"This ain't no bullshit!" I said. "I will shoot."

"Look here, Curt," he said. "Spouse we're just plain 'ol ordinary grunts. You gonna shoot us all? And if you do, don't you think we'd have friends who'd take it hard? Any way you slice it, you bookin' yourself a silver box and air freight home."

He came another step toward me, and I said, "Watch it, man!" He came another step, his devil mask split by a fierce grin. My heart felt hot and solid in my chest, no beats, and I thought, He's a ghost, his flesh is smoke, the paint a color in my eye. "Keep back!" I warned.

"Gonna kill me?" Again he grinned. "Go ahead." He lunged, a feint only, and I squeezed the trigger.

The gun jammed.

When I think now how this astounded me, I wonder at my idiocy. The gun jammed frequently. It was an absolute piece of shit, that weapon. But at the time its failure seemed a magical coincidence, a denial of the laws of chance. And adding to my astonishment was the reaction of the other men: they made no move toward Randall, as if no opportunity had been provided, no danger passed. Yet the tall guy looked somewhat shaken to me.

Randall let out a mewing noise, and that sound enlisted my competence. I edged between the tables and took a stand next to him. "Let me get the knife from him," I said. "No point in both of 'em dyin'."

The tall guy drew a deep breath as if to settle himself. "You reckon you can do that, Curt?"

"Maybe. If you guys wait outside, he won't be as scared and maybe I can get it."

They stared at me, unreadable.

"Gimme a chance."

"We ain't after no innocent blood." The tall guy's tone was grim, as if this were policy. "But ..."

"Just a couple minutes," I said. "That's all I'm askin'."

I could almost hear the tick of the tall guy's judgment. "Okay," he said at last. "But don't you go tryin' nothin' hinky, Curt." Then, to Randall, "We be waitin', Randall J."

As soon as they were out the door, I knelt beside Randall. Spitfire flecked the clerk's lips, and when Randall shifted the knife a tad, his eyes rolled up into heaven. "Leave me be," said Randall. He might have been talking to the air, the walls, the world.

"Give it up," I said.

He just blinked.

"Let him go and I'll help you," I said. "But if you cut him, you on your own. That how you want it?"

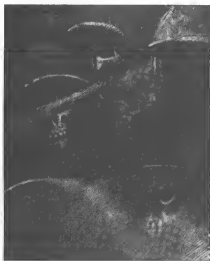
"Un-unh."

"Well, turn him loose."

"I can't," he said, a catch in his voice. "I'm all froze up. If I move, I'll cut him." Sweat dripped into his eyes, and he, blinked some more.

"How 'bout I take it from you? If you keep real still, if you lemme ease it outta your hand, maybe we can work it that way."

"I don't know ... I might mess up."



The clerk gave a long shuddery sigh and squeezed his eyes shut.

"You gonna be fine," I said to Randall. "Just keep your eyes on me, and you gonna be fine."

I stretched out my hand. The clerk was trembling, Randall was trembling, and when I touched the blade it was so full of vibration, it felt alive, as if all the energy in the room had been concentrated there. I tried pulling it away from the clerk's neck, but it wouldn't budge.

"You gotta loosen up, Randall," I said.

I tried again and, gripping the blade between my forefinger and thumb, managed to pry it an inch or so away from the line of blood it had drawn. My fingers were sweaty, the metal slick, and the blade felt like it was connected to a spring, that any second it would snap back and bite deep.

"My fingers are slippin'," I said, and the clerk whimpered.

"Ain't my fault if they do," Randall said pleadingly, as if testing the waters, the potentials of his guilt and innocence, and I realized he was setting me

up the way he had Moon's killers. It was a childlike attempt compared to the other, but I knew to his mind it would work out the same.

"The hell it ain't!" I said. "Don't do it, man!"

"It ain't my fault!" he insisted.

"Randall!"

I could feel his intent in the quiver of the blade. With my free hand, I grabbed the clerk's upper arm, and as the knife slipped, I jerked him to the side. The blade sliced his jaw, and he screeched; but the wound wasn't mortal.

I plucked the knife from Randall's hand, wanting to kill him myself. But I had invested too much in his salvation. I hauled him erect and over to the window; I smashed out the glass with a chair and pushed him through. Then I jumped after him. As I came to my feet, I saw the painted men closing in from the front of the PX and—still towing Randall along—I sprinted around the corner of the building and up the slope, calling for help. Lights flicked on, and heads popped from tent flaps. But when they spotted Randall, they ducked back inside.

I was afraid, but Randall's abject helplessness—his eyes rolling like a freaked calf's, his hands clawing at me for support—helped to steady me. The painted men seemed to be everywhere. They would materialize from behind tents, out of bunker mouths, grinning madly and waving moonstruck knives, and send us veering off in another direction, back and forth across the hill. Time and again, I thought they had us, and on several occasions, it was only by a hairsbreadth that I eluded the slash of a blade that looked to be bearing a charge of winking silver energy on its tip. I was wearing down, stumbling, gasping, and I was certain we couldn't last much longer. But we continued to evade them, and I began to sense that they were in no hurry to conclude the hunt; their pursuit had less an air of frenzy than of a ritual harassment, and eventually, as we staggered up to the mouth of the operations bunker and—I believed—safety, I realized that they had been herding us. I pushed Randall inside and glanced back from the sandbagged entrance. The five men stood motionless a second, perhaps fifty feet away, then melted into the darkness.

I explained what had happened to the MP on duty in the bunker—a heavyset guy named Cousins—and, though he had no love for Randall, he was a dutiful sort and gave us per-

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mission to wait out the night inside. Randall slumped down against the wall, resting his head on his knees, the picture of despair. But I believed that his survival was assured. With the testimony of the clerk, I thought the shrinks would have no choice but to send him elsewhere for examination and possible institutionalization. I felt good, accomplished, and passed the night chain-smoking, bullshitting with Cousins.

Then, toward dawn, a voice issued from the radio. It was greatly distorted, but it sounded very much like Randall's.

"Randall J.," it said. "This here's Delta Sly Honey. Do you read? Over."

Randall looked up, hearkening to the spit and fizzle of the static.

"I know you out there, Randall J.," the voice went on. "I can see you clear, sitting with the shadows of the bars upon your soul and blood on your hands. Ain't no virtuous blood, that's true. But it stains you alla same. Come back at me, Randall J. We gotta talk, you and me."

Randall let his head fall; with a finger, he traced a line in the dust.

"What's the point in keepin' this up, Randall J.?" said the voice. "You left the best part of you over here, the soulful part, and you can't go on much longer without it. Time to take that little walk for real, man. Time to get clear of what you done and pass on to what must be. We waitin' for you just north of base, Randall J. Don't make us come for you."

It was in my mind to say something to Randall, to break the disconsolate spell the voice appeared to be casting over him; but I found I had nothing left to give him, that I had spent my fund of altruism and was mostly weary of the whole business ... as he must have been.

"Ain't nothin' to be 'fraid of out here," said the voice. "Only the wind and the gray whispers of phantom Charlie and the trail leadin' away from the world. There's good company for you, Randall J. Gotta man here used to be a poet, and he'll tell you stories 'bout the Wild North King and the Woman of Crystal. Got another fella, guy used to live in Indonesia, and he's fulla tales 'bout watchin' tigers come

out on the highways to shit and cities of men dressed like women and islands where dragons still live. Then there's this kid from Opelika, claims to know some of your people down that way, and when he talks, you can just see that ol' farmboy moon heavin' up big and yellow over the bars, shinin' the blacktop so it looks like polished jet, and you can hear crazy music leakin' from the Dixieland café and smell the perfumed heat steamin' off the young girls' breasts. Don't make us wait no more, Randall J. We got work to do. Maybe it ain't much, just breakin' trail and walkin' point and keepin' a sharp eye out for demons ... but it sure as

*"Seems to me,
that's the nature
of war," said
Randall, "that
all the violence
has the effect of
lettin' a little
magic seep into
the world by way
of compensation."*

hell beats shepherdin' the dead, now don't it?" A long pause. "You come on and take that walk, Randall J. We'll make you welcome, I promise. This here's Delta Sly Honey. Over and out."

Randall pulled himself to his feet and took a few faltering steps toward the mouth of the bunker. I blocked his path and he said, "Lemme go, Curt."

"Look here, Randall," I said. "I might can get you home if you just hang on."

"Home." The concept seemed to amuse him, as if it were something with the dubious reality of heaven or hell. "Lemme go."

In his eyes, then, I thought I could see all his broken parts, a disjointed shifting of lights and darks, and when I spoke I felt I was giving tongue to a vast consensus, one arrived at without either ballots or reasonable discourse. "If I let you go," I said, "be better you didn't come back this time."

He stared at me, his face gone slack, and nodded.

Hardly anybody was outside, yet I had the idea everyone was watching us as we walked down the hill; under a leaden overcast, the base had a

tense, muted atmosphere such as must have attended rainy dawns beneath the guillotine. The sentries at the main gate passed Randall through without questions. He went a few paces along the road, then turned back, his face pale as a star in the half-light, and I wondered if he thought we were driving him off or if he believed he was being called to a better world. In my heart I knew which was the case. At last he set out again, quickly becoming a shadow, then the rumor of a shadow, then gone.

Walking back up the hill, I tried to sort out my thought, to determine what I was feeling, and it may be a testament to how crazy I was, how crazy we all were, that I felt less regret for a man lost than satisfaction in knowing that some perverted justice had been served, that the world of the war-tipped off-center by this un-military engagement and our focus upon it—could now go back to spinning true.

That night there was fried chicken in the mess, and vanilla ice cream, and afterward a movie about a more reasonable war, full of villainous Germans with Dracula accents and heroic grunts who took nothing but flesh wounds. When it was done, I walked back to my hooch and stood out front and had a smoke. In the northern sky was a flickering orange glow, one accompanied by the rumble of artillery. It was, I realized, just about this time of night that Randall has customarily begun his broadcasts. Somebody else must have realized this, because at that moment the PA was switched on. I half expected to hear Randall giving the news of Delta Sly Honey, but there was only static, sounding like the crackling of enormous flames. Listening to it, I felt disoriented, completely vulnerable, as if some huge black presence were on the verge of swallowing me up. And then a voice did speak. It wasn't Randall's yet it had a similar countrified accent and though the words weren't quite as fluent, they were redolent of his old raps, lending a folksy comprehensibility to the vastness of the cosmos, the strangeness of the war. I had no idea whether or not it was the voice that had summoned Randall to take his walk, no longer effecting an imitation, and I thought I recognized its soft, well-modulated tones. But none of that mattered. I was so grateful, so relieved by this end to silence, that I went into my hooch and—armed with lies—sat down to finish my interrupted letter home. ■

CUTTLEFISH

(continued from page 69)

dumb after all—

And then, Timmy remembered something from special school, how the blind girl used to say, "Can I read your face?" and she'd reach out and touch your face so she could "see" it with her fingertips ... Timmy was good at feeling nameplates to read them, so maybe—

Maybe he could be as smart as Dr. Curwen ... he could read too, in a special way. Pulling over the plastic and rubber round footstool Dr. Curwen used, Timmy stepped up close to the tank, and after pushing up his sleeve, put his hand and arm into the cool rippling water, seeing the oil residue of fishie food cling to his bare arm at the water line. His hand and arm looked all funny—wavy and sort of blue—when he looked at it through the glass, and all the cuttlefish jetted over to inspect his waving arms. He tried to pet them, to "read" them like the blind girl used to do, but they eluded his grasp, and the more he wiggled his fingers and tried to grab them, the cooler his hand got.

And it began to look ... different. Pruney, like when he sat in the bathtub too long, but also longer, and paler blue. And Timmy looked at his fingers through the glass, remembering what Daddy said about when Aunt Millie died, when Daddy was talking to their neighbor Mrs. Coffey when he didn't think Timmy could hear, "The nurse said her lips went blue, her nails too ... at that point there wasn't much to do, since she specified no help and ..." and Timmy kept wiggling his odd blue fingers, until he thought, *Blue fingers ... and Aunt Millie died and they put her in a box and then we had the visitation.*

One of the cuttlefish pulsed over by his hand, and with the most gentle of motions, wrapped a tendril-like arm around his elongated and blue-pulsing finger, and his finger and the arm of the cuttlefish both changed—together. And as the earth shook under the tank, the cuttlefish and Timmy looked at each other, and all Timmy could see in his mind was Aunt Millie, dead in the box ... and he understood for the first time that evening. Lips close to the tank, Timmy whispered, "I'm going to die ... and you knew it, didn't you guys?"

And the cuttlefish, who had been spending two years watching Dr. Cur-

wen—his efforts at communication on the sensor board, as well as the bits of communicating he did without thinking, the nod of his head, or the smile on his face before he typed in a message of praise—slowly moved in the water without shifting color or shape, a simple motion, actually, but to Timmy it was a miracle. The fish had said something to him! No funny green letters and hooked things on a screen, just a nod of its body—meant just for him. Timmy's Daddy had told Timmy at the funeral, "We all have to die, Timmy ... it's sad Aunt Millie is gone, but she's not hurting where she is. Remember that, okay, son?"

Timmy had remembered, and as the floor shook so much it made the little pills on Dr. Curwen's counter shake and roll, he very carefully took one of the cuttlefish's arms between his thumb and forefinger and shook it, then pulled his hand out of the tank and dried it on his big pink rag hung on the side of his mop stand. As it dried the pink color gradually returned, and the fingers grew short and blunt again ... but Tim-

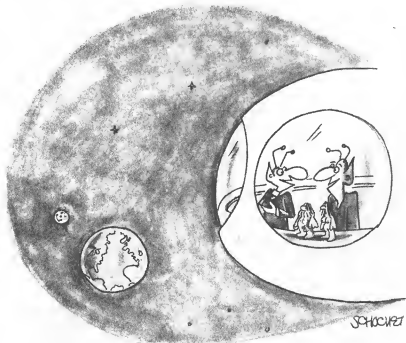
my didn't forget what he'd seen. The fish said he'd die, but Daddy said it meant not hurting any more. No more people making fun at him, making him hurt inside. Something to look forward to, not fear.

Then, afraid because he'd already spent too much time lingering here, Timmy waved a single goodbye to the tank of fishes, and leaving the light on the way the doctor left it, he quitted the room and carefully locked the door behind him.

On the way to Dr. Jones's (one hand) lab, he felt the floor move again under his feet, enough to slosh some of the water from his bucket onto the sand-colored carpeting, and Timmy hoped that one of the big sand-filled ash trays wouldn't tip over. The time he'd spent lingering in Dr. Curwen's office slipped from his mind.

He didn't think that he had the time to clean up after the ash trays tonight, too. ■

THIS STORY IS DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF THEODORE STURGEON, WHO TRULY UNDERSTOOD THE MEANING OF UNDERSTANDING.



"This looks like a good place to dump these rabbits."

(continued from page 24)

without success. A newer tactic is to find materials that the body's own endothelial cells will adhere to and grow on, thus provided the perfect lining to all the parts of an artificial organ.

There's an interesting line of study there. The endothelium of some other mammals, notably dogs and rhesus monkeys, is better at covering implants than our own. There's research going on now to find ways either to make our own endothelium as good as theirs, or to genetically alter theirs to replace our own... and thus mechanical organs may become a realistic alternative.

Meanwhile, we're pretty much stuck with scavenging the useful bits out of corpses, even for such simple items as blood vessels. (However, there at least there is a good supply, at least in the small sizes. For more than a decade thousands of useful veins and arteries have been harvested each year from very healthy sources that otherwise would simply be thrown away—namely the umbilical cords of newborn babies.)

It should be borne in mind that there is a limit to what transplants can do. If Arnold Schwarzenegger would let you have his muscles to transplant into your own body, they would not make you as strong as Schwarzenegger himself. The muscles don't create energy, any more than the engine of your car does. Both muscles and motors are only machines. They need to be fueled with energy to work. You would need Schwarzenegger's lungs to oxygenate your blood and Schwarzenegger's heart to pump it to the muscles, otherwise it would be like trying to run an electric locomotive from a flashlight battery. More important still, you would need Schwarzenegger's disciplined willingness to work out for endless hours to keep those muscles bulging... but if you had that kind of determination in the first place why would you need the transplants?

A more significant consideration is that even the transplant of a healthy organ does little good if it is transplanted into the same situation that destroyed the original. In the long run, the best treatment for any disease is to keep it from occurring in the first place, whether the disease is AIDS, cancer, or simple aging... and for that we need genetic selection and editing-out of the bad genes long before the baby is born.

The astonishing (and worrisome) thing is that it seems very likely that one day not too many decades from now, the control of the DNA corkscrew may make that possible. If we

BIOFUTURES:

can edit the genetic material of a strawberry plant to keep it from freezing, there is every chance that we can edit the genetic material of a human being to keep him from being born with spinal bifida, or Tay-Sachs disease, or even the tendency to degenerate as he grows old.

Who Shall Choose?

And how will we deal with these prospects when they arrive? Will we regulate the sexual behavior of men and women so that no pregnancy is allowed in the normal way? Will we require that a baby be conceived only by artificial insemination, if not in-vitro fertilization, so that there can be advance survey and alteration of the sperm and the ova? And how will we enforce any regulation of that sort? What will we do with the people who don't comply? And, for that matter, who will set the standards of what genetic traits are "allowed" or "encouraged"?

It's no good comfortably postponing these questions as problems for our posterity. We already have to decide what we must do about the problems that biotechnology has confronted us with today. If one healthy organ is available and ten babies are on the point of death without it, which one gets it? If an old man, comatose and suffering, develops pneumonia, does the doctor give him antibiotics or let him peacefully slip away? How long do you keep a patient with a flat brain wave artificially alive on the heart-lung machine? If a man is dying in agony of AIDS, do you allow him to take his own life?—Do you forgive the mother, friend, or lover who spares him further suffering with a bullet? If a pauper needs a heart transplant, but has not got the horrendously vast sum of money needed to pay for it, do you give it to him out of charity, by levying it on the taxpayer? How much should advanced kinds of medicine be available only to the rich?—And, if it is to be made available to everyone, where will the money come from?

There is a more fundamental

question than any of these to be decided, and that is who should be allowed to make such decisions? Should a woman be allowed to decide by herself to abort a doomed or damaged child? Or, for that matter, a simply unwanted one? Should a parent be permitted, out of religious beliefs or even whim, to deny medical treatment to a baby?

We manage to find solutions to most of these problems in one way or another because we have no choice; the questions come up, decisions have to be made.

For most of them we make the decision in the same way we make most large social decisions, by counting up dollar bills. If the person can afford what he wants, he gets it. (But is that in any sense fair?) The most frequent public alternative is to refer it to some judge—rarely one who is skilled in such matters—who, in the absence of good law or custom or precedent, has to decide. But should such questions be left to any single person?

The advent of the computer and a host of other aids to intelligence and investigation has brought about a vast acceleration in the progress of science and technology. Our social institutions have yet to catch up. We see the Earth's ozone layer thinning, and we know that will cause at least thousands of skin cancers and perhaps the destruction of most life on Earth, but we go on permitting the manufacture of the chlorofluorocarbons that seem to be destroying it. We know that the temperature of the Earth has been slowly going up, along with the proportion of carbon dioxide in the air, but we keep on burning fossil fuels to raise the carbon dioxide level, and destroying the plant life that otherwise would help to keep it down.

It isn't the technology that's at fault. Many people are fearful of nuclear power plants—with good reason, after the countless near-misses like Three Mile Island and the outright catastrophe of Chernobyl—but in few of those cases did the technology fail. The machines did what they were supposed to do; the people running the machines caused the accidents.

Biotechnology is no different. The good news is that it promises for the future, and has already begun to provide, a happier, better, more rewarding life for us all. The bad news is that, like all the rest of our technology, it presents challenges we have never had to face before. With the next turn of the corkscrew they are going to confront us with great urgency... and we are simply going to have to grow up enough to meet them. ■



An Introduction to

"New Age"

Mystical Junkets

by

Mark Arnold

It's vacation time. You've picked up the travelers' cheques, packed your Banana Republic safari casuals, bought a new lens for the Minolta ... only problem is, there's nowhere to go. You've done China, you don't dare the mad bombers of Paris, Club Med is so horribly bridge'n' tunnel-crowd these days, and if you get booked onto another damned Caribbean Windjammer cruise, you'll simply scream! Mother of mercy, is there nowhere left but ... the Epcot Center?

Fear not, traveler. Enter the wondrous worlds of New Age mystical junkets—just the ticket for the well heeled, footloose, restless spirit. For a mere few grand the enlightened elite of summer can voyage beyond the horizon and over the rainbow, embark on vision quests in the Yucatan, join voodoo rituals in Rio, help psychic surgeons in Cebu, meet space gods in the Andes, and have a ringside seat for the End of the World. Sometimes called esoteric travel, or journeys of the spirit, these magical mystery tours aren't merely the antidote to civilization.

They're the antidote to reality.

But make no mistake—New Age

vacations aren't for party animals. These trips are good for you, your eternal soul, and your cosmic evolution; you are entering a pilgrimage of "personal and planetary transformation."

The true purpose of these jaunts, according to one admiring travel writer, is to "reawaken the Earth through high-consciousness healing visits to major sacred/energy nodal points." Got that? Occult travel agents insist that you'll receive transcendent karmic energy along with your amoebic dysentery; and thus you've got responsibilities that go well beyond picking up your litter when you leave. You'll be expected to acquit your spiritual obligations by conducting "planetary healing," broadcasting the etheric energies you've picked up, and telling all your friends where they can

claims World Light Travels co-director Joseph Jochmans, who further reveals that the signal for Armageddon will be the moment the still-living heart of the Feathered Serpent god Quetzalcoatl explodes up from beneath a sacred tree in Oaxaca, Mexico. Jochmans knows the time. And he knows *which tree!* For \$1,777, you can be there, "Fulfilling the Ancient Prophecy of the Feathered Serpent." (August 15-23; World Light Travels, P.O. Box 9508, Wyoming, MI 49509).

AND FOR MY NEXT ACT ...

Not to suggest that World Light's directors Jochmans and John Davis might hedge their bets—but a \$2,222-a-head tour billed as "Contact with the Star Gods of the Andes" is scheduled for ... October 10-20. Are deposits

ULTIMATE



sign on.

If you're even allowed to go at all. In addition to being deadly earnest, spiritual tour leaders are picky. Memberships are limited, and applicants must be qualified. It helps to believe in whatever ball of wax the tour is peddling. And it helps to have ready cash.

Tour organizations around the U.S. will mount more than a hundred occult journeys to various points of the globe this summer and fall. Here are just a few.

ALL ABOARD FOR DOOMSDAY

Mark your calendars: *The world will end on August 17, 1987*, Says who? The ancient Aztecs, that's who. Or so

refundable if the world ends in August? Incidentally, in lieu of a recreation director, World Lights tours are accompanied by a Tarot-astrology counsellor, to reveal the future you might not have.

YOU GIVE ME TWO WEEKS, I'LL MAKE YOU A SHAMAN

SF State University professor Dr. Alberto Villoldo is co-author of *Healing States*, a favorably reviewed volume on alternative medicine. But in his free time, Villoldo leads bunches of trips to "make direct contact with ... the mythic realms of the gods." And what a choice of gods there are! Take your pick from: a Mayan vision quest with ritual drumming for evening listening pleasure (October 4-17, \$1,650); then an Incan "Shaman's Journey" with an honest-to-gosh Incan Shaman (October 18-31, \$2,450); a Brazilian "Healer's Journey" to "claim our immortality" among psychic "energy medicine" healers (November 1-14, \$2,850); and, for the intense, "The Way of the Warrior," a jungle trek featuring the Incan Shaman and not one, but two Amazon witch doctors (November 15-30, \$2,450). All prices are from Miami; meals not included. (The Four Winds Foundation, P.O. Box

ROCK ON

If the Amazon sounds too rugged, Joseph Cohen leads six-day "Crystal Journeys" to rural "earth energy" sites. In Canada. The jam-packed itinerary includes classes on crystal power, ceremonial healing, storytelling, geomancy, energy fields, ley lines, and dowsing. For fun, "we tune into the earth mother energy, and keep a dream journal." This, plus all the nuts and berries you can forage, for only \$360 U.S. (Joseph Cohen, PO Box 7228, Station A. Toronto, Ontario, M5W 1X8, Canada).

PSYCHIC SURGERY

Apparently the Philippines is known for something even more rarified than the Imelda Marcos Shoe Museum. The



GET AWAYS

"Philippines Energy Healing and Psychic Surgery" tour (November, 1987) will spend two weeks with famous supernatural miracle healers. Tour director Leo Pulos promises "ample opportunities for everyone to experience healing." Forget your wallet—keep your hand on your organs, lest some psychic surgeon literally steal your heart. The \$2,900 fee includes meals and "deluxe" accommodations in Baguio, Cebu, Pangasinan, and Vigan, Philippines. (Travel Associates, 319 Miller Ave., Mill Valley, CA 94941)

TALK LIKE AN EGYPTIAN

Okay—journeys down the Nile have been the staple of every tour agency since the days of Marc Antony. What's so special about "Temples of Light—Temples of Transformation" (October, 1987, \$2,144)? Well, for starters, both tour directors, Anne Tunstall and Diane Shields, promote themselves as "experienced facilitators"—and psychic mediums. No promises: but don't be surprised if, instead of fake belly dancing, the evening entertainment includes guest appearances by the ghosts of everyone from King Tut to Isis and Osiris to Cleopatra and her asp. (Earthlight Travels, 163 Water St., Newburyport, MA 01950).

ASTRAL FLYING DOWN TO RIO

Conducted by self proclaimed psychic healer Edmondo Barbosa, the "Brazilian Mystical Tour" (September 25—October 10, \$2,549) seems to offer something for everybody. Well, almost everybody. Members "study and experience" firewalking, spirit possession, Umbanda ritual, psychic surgery, more spirit possession, Candomble ceremonies (an Afro-Brazilian kin to macumba voodoo), and, for a change of pace, spirit possession. (Liza Williams, P.O. Box 655, Bolinas, CA 94924)



THERE'S A PROPHET BORN EVERY MINUTE

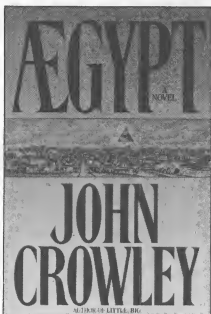
Mexico's Huichol Indians want you to know their tribal name means "the Prophets." Imagine: an entire tribe of primeval enlightened masters, just ninety miles north of Guadalajara! Isn't that amazing? And, under the guidance of Prem Das, a "certified" *marakame* Shaman (certified by who? by a one-hundred-six-year-old Huichol Indian, that's who!), carefully selected groups of tourists can thrill to intensive cultural interactions in remote mountain villages. Live like the Indians; with the Indians; spirit cooking, food gatherings; help till crops. In other words, the tour directors take you to a remote mountain village. And leave you there. A spiritually uplifting week of crushing third world poverty among the Prophets can be yours for only \$575 (not including transportation to Tepic, Mexico). Isn't that amazing? (Institute for the Study of Natural Systems, P.O. Box 637, Mill Valley, CA 94941).

If, sadly, you've already made your vacation plans for this year, rest assured that these organizations and many others already have scheduled packages for 1988 and beyond. You'll have plenty of chances to pack up your karma in your old kit bag. Happy astral trails. ■

BOOKS

(continued from page 13)

of the late Frank Herbert, Berkley has published a trade paperback collection of interviews with him and articles by him. It's *The Maker of Dune* edited by Tim O'Reilly (279 pp., \$7.95, ISBN 0-425-09785-4). Herbert biographer



O'Reilly has put together a collection of articles, introductions, and essays selected by Frank Herbert before his death. It's a decent collection of auctorial ephemera, something like an autobiographical scrapbook. A Herbert bibliography is included. The book is largely and thankfully free of an aura of hero-worship. Exception is apparently made for the cover painting depicting the late writer as a face on Mt. Rushmore.

And finally, for those of you who have been slaverding during the long wait, here it is: *The Nightmare on Elm Street Companion* by Jeffrey Cooper (St. Martin's Press, 120 pp., \$10.95, ISBN 0-312-00168-1). It's just what it sounds like. No profound French cinecrit here. Just fluff and info about Freddy Krueger and all his little friends. Lots of pictures, color and black and white. I shouldn't sound snide. I truly liked the first in the series. As far as I'm concerned, *A Nightmare on Elm Street* was to imaginative film of the eighties what *Orbit* was to sf stories in the sixties. And

no, I won't explain that right now.

Big Books

Richard Grant's *Rumors of Spring* (Bantam, 448 pp., \$8.95, ISBN 0-553-34369-6) is one of several very thick novels to come my way of late. It is an earnest novel. That is an observation, not a negative judgement. It's a reasonably complex science-fiction fantasy about the last bit of forest left in the world. Grant's good and he's getting better. Not only should you read this novel, you probably ought to spring for another ten bucks and get the hardback (ISBN 0-553-05190-3).

After all the volumes of *The Belgariad*, David Eddings is writing a long sequel in the form of a series called *The Mallorean*, of which *Guardians of the West* (Del Rey, 454 pp., \$16.95, ISBN 0-345-33000-5) is the first. Here's another big book, daunting to those who might approach it unawares. If you didn't know Eddings was a witty and entertaining writer, you might be put off a bit by jacket copy such as: "Garion had slain the evil God Torak and been crowned King of Riva. The Prophecy was fulfilled—or so it seemed. While the strange child Errand was growing up in the Vale of Adlur with Polgara and Dumrik, showing only occasional flashes of inexplicable knowledge and power, Garion was learning to rule and to be the husband of his fiery little Queen Ce-Nedra. Eleven Years Passed." And so on. Not what I call charismatic flacking. It could be any great lump of high fantasy. But it's not. It's Eddings.

One of the biggest treats of the season (in more ways than one) is John Crowley's *Aegypt* (Bantam, 390 pp., \$17.95, ISBN 0-553-05194-6). Crowley's disclosure that our world has a secret history, a hidden agenda, reminded me a bit of Pincheon's *The Crying of Lot 49*. More important, I discovered that *Aegypt* has some of the same dynamics as a glacier. It takes a while to move; but once it gets going, it punches (at least with me) all sorts of strange internal buttons. What a fascinating and magical book!

I admit I knew before reading Crowley's novel that the world has a hidden and alternative history. The clues come through every once in a while. For example, the Bantam publicity magazine accompanying *Aegypt* informed me that John Crowley was the author of such highly regarded novels as *Breasts*. No doubt there is a line of history in which Crowley is known as the Philip Roth of sf. ■

TZ/SF:

(continued from page 80)

the sf on *The Twilight Zone* may have seemed somewhat rudimentary to the oldtime fans raised on Gernsback and Campbell, but what were the movies of the day coming up with? *The Hideous Sun Demon*, *Teenagers from Outer Space*, *Invasion of the Star Creatures*, and *Mothra*. It's easy to see why sf fans, starved for anything that didn't insult them, lauded *The Twilight Zone*.

All right, so let's say a third of the episodes were science fiction. Just how good are they as science fiction? Certainly, the stories were often delightful, many unforgettable: "Two," where American soldier Charles Bronson and Russian soldier Elizabeth Montgomery must end World War III on a personal level; "Eye of the Beholder," where a totalitarian dys-topia finds beauty hideous; "On Thursday We Leave for Home," where James Whitmore keeps a group of colonists alive on a harsh planet through sheer determination only to doom himself when rescue arrives. The list goes on and on. But in the area of scientific accuracy, the stories often fall short. In "Third from the Sun," another star system is placed eleven million miles from earth—closer than the nearest planet. In "The Lonely" and "I Shot an Arrow into the Air," asteroids have the same gravity and atmosphere as Earth. In "The Little People" and "The Invaders," we meet giant-sized, human-shaped aliens (where's the square-cube law when you need it?). And "Time Enough at Last"—many people's favorite episode of all—has Burgess Meredith blithely wandering through nuclear-charred ruins, with no mention of the undoubtedly-lethal radiation all around him.

In the end, of course, all labelling is trivial, angels on the head of a pin. Fans and critics alike have spent the better part of a century debating just what is science fiction. My own favorite comes from Damon Knight, whose story "To Serve Man" made one corkscrew of an episode. He said, "Science fiction is what I'm pointing at when I say, 'Science fiction.'" Whether any given story on *The Twilight Zone* is fantasy or science fiction, the ultimate—and only vital—question remains, "Does it tell a good tale?" And, as we all know, the answer is overwhelmingly yes. ■



HOLLYWOOD GRAPEVINE

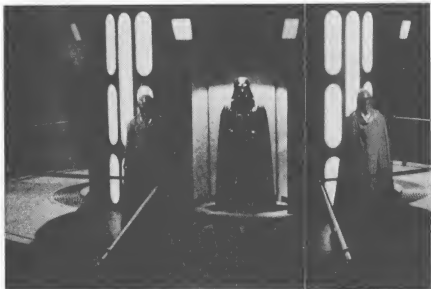
Information and speculations on fantastic film and television.

Amazing as it seems, *Star Wars* is ten years old. On May 25, 1977, Twentieth Century-Fox (they still had the hyphen then) released unto the world* a little science fiction picture that no one (repeat, *No One*) thought would break even. Suffice it to say *Star Wars* changed the course of the film and toy industries for, in all probability, the rest of the century.

To celebrate this auspicious occasion, *Starlog* Magazine sponsored a science fiction convention held in Los Angeles over Memorial Day weekend. It was the first time since *Star Wars* was released that George Lucas has appeared at a science fiction convention.

As far back as post-production on *The Empire Strikes Back* Lucas was saying that he was drained by all the energy and effort a *Star Wars* film takes and that he had no intention of going beyond the first trilogy. But it's known that Lucas could use a successful film right about now. His divorce from Marcia Lucas drained a major portion of his holding. Skywalker Ranch, his home and post-production facility in Northern California, is a money sink. Industrial Light & Magic is successful but doesn't make the kind of money needed to support a production company. And his last couple films—including *Howard the Duck*—were far from successful.

A number of insiders and friends of Lucas's thought he might use the occasion of *Star Wars'* anniversary to announce *Star Wars IV*. But that was not to be. Not quite, anyway. In a change-of-heart statement, Lucas now says that he will be doing another trilogy, he just doesn't know when. The



NOW WE ARE TEN: Lucas hedges on new *Star Wars* episodes.

stories are plotted, he said, but there are no scripts and no timetable for production.

Lucas said that he had several other projects to deal with first, including the next *Indiana Jones* film (which won't get made until Steven Spielberg gets finished with the several projects on his plate). Lucas also went on to say that he hopes to produce three to five films per year.

Lucas is currently executive producing *Willow* for Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. This fantasy epic is scheduled for release during the summer of 1988. The film is shooting in England (at the Elstree Studios) and in New Zealand. Ron Howard is directing from a screenplay by Bob Dolman based on an original story by George Lucas. The film stars Val Kilmer, Joanne Whalley, Warwick Davis, Billy Barty, and Jean Marsh.

MGM is also in production on *Poltgeist III*. This time the ghostly outing will be written by Gary Sherman and Brian Taggart, directed by Gary Sherman, and produced by Barry Bernardi. New to the cast will be Tom Skerritt and Nancy Allen, with Heather O'Rourke

and Zelda Rubinstein returning.

More troubles for *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. First there were reports that the executives at Paramount weren't happy with what was coming through. Then there were stories that story editor Dorothy Fontana and staff writer David Gerrold were in total disagreement over the direction of the show and that every decision was a battle. Now Gerrold has left the show, apparently of his own volition.

Of the eleven scripts either completed or in progress as of the end of May, seven have been killed and the other four are being re-written.

According to the show's updated bible, the new crew now includes:

Captain Jean-Luc Picard: "Already a Starfleet legend, Picard is an extraordinary man, much revered by his crew. Distinguished."

Commander William Riker (also known as "Number One"): "Early thirties, the ship's Executive Officer and second in command. [Acts] as commander of 'away' missions, both planetary and other kinds."

Lt. Commander Data: "An android

so perfectly fabricated by unknown aliens that ... he tested out as alive. [Has] the impossible dream of somehow, someday, becoming human."

Lt. Deanna Troi: "... attractive and very witty ... she is the starship's Counselor. Troi is a 'master in Human and Alien Psychology, also Starfleet-trained as a bridge officer. Her mother was a Betazed alien and she has inherited a form of telepathic ability which allows her to 'feel' the emotions of others."

Lt. Natasha Tasha' Yar: "Security Chief ... performs that same function both aboard ship and on away missions."

Lt. (j.g.) Geordi La Forge: "An away-mission regular who is racially black and birth-defect blind—although with prosthetic super-high tech artificial 'eyes' which can detect electromagnetic waves. Because of his 'eyes,' Geordi can ... perform some of the functions of a tricorder."

Chief Medical Officer Dr. Beverly Crusher: "An extremely attractive woman in her early-to-mid forties. She and Picard know each other from his delivering the [dead] body of her husband to her after a mission accident. It was his orders that sent her husband there and she has found it difficult to forgive Picard."

Wesley Wesley Crusher: "A smallish, bright fifteen-year-old boy who came aboard with his mother Beverly. Although ... an awkward teenager ... he [displays] genius in the areas of starship engineering and related physical sciences (including warp velocity navigation). In some future episode, Captain Picard will ... [appoint] Wes an acting-ersign assigned to Starship Operations."

The cast includes Patrick Stewart, Jonathan Frakes, LeVar Burton, Denise Crosby, Cheryl McCadden, Marina Sittis, Brent Spiner, and Wil Wheaton. The series will premiere the weekend of October third and fourth with a two-hour pilot episode titled "Encounter at Farpoint."

Our favorite independent producers, The Cabana Boys, are at it again. Various members of the production team were at Cannes and talking about the production.

Roy Stevens will be producing the film *Neuromancer*, based on the novel by William Gibson. His credits include line producing *The Year of Living Dangerously* and *Ryan's Daughter*. While a veteran filmmaker, his attitude toward the genre is not exactly high. In a comment quoted in *The Holly-*

wood Reporter Stevens said, "I've never had any particular interest in science fiction because I haven't seen anything that is a real story." Stevens goes on to say that unlike most science fiction, this work has a beginning, middle, and end.

Also now involved according to Stevens is "the greatest special effects man. An equal with Doug Trumbull. Derek Meddings." Meddings is certainly competent. His credits include a number of James Bond pictures, some work on *Superman: The Motion Picture*, and *Krull*. But he's far from "the greatest."

The production company hasn't completed doing breakdowns, but the picture is expected to be budgeted at around fifteen million dollars. No major distributor is yet involved. Cabana Boys Productions claims this gives them more freedom to make a terrific picture, and once they've produced their masterwork, it will command a better deal. A good theory. But only if you can really make a picture distributors think a lot of people will want to see. It's worked for some. It's failed for a lot more. We'll see.

Amid persistent rumors of attempts to revise the dormant *Twilight Zone* television series, several veterans of the show are working together again on *Beauty and the Beast*, a new CBS comedy-drama that debuts this fall. Created by Ron Koslow (*Lifeguard*) for Witt-Thomas, the series is an updating of the classic fairy tale in an urban setting. Supervising Producer is James Crocker, Line Producer is Harvey Frand, and George R.R. Martin is Executive Story Editor. Linda Hamilton (*The Terminator*) is *Beauty*, and newcomer Ron Perlman plays the Beast.

The last week in May, the jury rendered its verdict in the *Twilight Zone* movie trial. All of the defendants—John Landis and George Folsey, co-producers; Dan Allingham, the film's Unit Production Manager; Paul Steward, special effects coordinator; and Dorsey Wingo, pilot of the helicopter that took the lives of Vic Morrow, Myca Dinh Le, and Renee Chen—were acquitted of all charges stemming from the trial. Deputy D.A. Lea D'Agostino has been vehement in her criticism of the jury's decision. James Camomile, the stunt coordinator who set the explosive charges that actually brought down the helicopter, had been granted immunity from prosecution. ■



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THE OTHER SIDE

THE ZONE OF SILENCE

Imagine the strange and fascinating experience of reading a book. But not just any book. A weird book, different from any other, filled with unique and mysterious paragraphs. First, let's consider a remarkable periodical—this one. Why?

It can be proven that the fibers of this magazine you now hold casually in your hands were created in a process directly descended from methods invented nearly three thousand years ago by the ancient Egyptians to manufacture papyrus scrolls, scrolls which vanished from the earth forever when the great library at Alexandria burned at the time of the Caesars. How is that possible? Perhaps this magazine—and the strange ideas within it—originate from another planet. Surprising recent polls indicate that almost seventy-five percent of Americans believe in the possibility of life on other planets, and it has been shown that the more intelligent, the more likely the reader is to believe we may not be alone! And....

Perhaps you begin to believe that this article is not about anything, that it is as full of insignificant sound and fury as Jack Palance reading the phone book. It is more than that. It is, in fact, about an experience much like being shown around our fabulous, exciting Grand Canyon by a tireless, well-intentioned carnival barker. It's about a book. A book called *The Zone of Silence*, published by Avon. Which is actually about something, something strange and interesting, and truly mysterious.

The Zone of Silence is a place—an enormous patch of treacherous one-hundred-twenty degree

Mexican desert—which has, according to its author, Gerry Hunt, a few things in common with the Bermuda Triangle, a few in common with the moon, a few in common with an irradiated garden. Radio signals and engines cease above certain eight-inch

gee-whiz style? Perhaps, some of the locals speculate, it came at the urging of extraterrestrial publishers. If it did, perhaps that explains why his book sold out a few short months after the first printing. As the mystery continues, publishers are



spans of earth. Violet cacti grow beside normal green cacti—and turn green when transported elsewhere. Rockets from mid-America reprogram themselves to come hurtling to this place, where tortoises are tailless, and iron appears in rock in perfect grid shapes.

What explains all this, the spinning compass dials and more? Hunt quotes scores of baffled people. He poses every bizarre reason known to man as a distinct possibility. Nobody knows. "It may," Hunt says after listing all UFO-related explanations, "forever remain a mystery."

Why does Gerry Hunt, rumored pal of Robin "Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous" Leach, bury his enormous research in a

still looking over the book. How many more could sell? Experts find that *The Zone of Silence* looks like an ordinary book, yet is choc-a-bloc with weird true facts and open-mouthed amazement. More that that, nobody knows.

—Jay Sheckley

MORE HOKEY HOLIDAYS

We hadn't intended to do this a second time, but all of you calendar-watchers out there insisted. So here is our second round-up of wierd, bizarre or otherwise semi-meaningless events you may (or may not) wish to commemorate:

October 5—Dalton Raid Day. Coffeyville, Kansas,

makes a fling of the day the Dalton Gang tried to rob two banks at the same time, in 1892. Four of the bandits and four of the town's citizenry died as a result of the ensuing shoot-out. They go in for rough holidays in Coffeyville.

October 8—Mrs. O'Leary's Cow Day, commemorating the legendary bovine whose errant hoof allegedly started the Chicago fire.

October 30—War of the Worlds Broadcast Anniversary. What a night this is to go look for Martians in New Jersey! Lots of people did—or ran in the other direction—when Orson Welles and the Mercury Players caused a panic, in 1938, with their radio version of H.G. Wells's story about a Martian invasion.

November 13—Friday the Thirteenth. This will be the last of 1987's three Friday the Thirteenth—a good day for learning to spell "Triskaidekaphobia," meaning the fear of the number thirteen.

November 30—Hold the Mayo Day-o. It's forties film queen Virginia Mayo's birthday! Why not take a starlet to lunch?

December 2—Chain Reaction Day. The anniversary of the first nuclear fission of uranium isotope U-235 at the University of Chicago by a team of physicists led by Enrico Fermi. Have a blast!

December 18—Underdog Day. A day reserved in honor of all the world's unsung heroes, second bananas, and also-rans. On this day, Sherlock Holmes can just go play the fiddle—so there! This day belongs to Watson.

December 25—Yes, it's Christmas. But we celebrate it around these offices for another reason as well: it's Rod Serling's birthday. And a Happy Rod Day to you!

—Ron Wolfe

THE OTHER SIDE

MARY & PERCY & BYRON & CLAIRE

Gothic is British film director Ken Russell's idea of what happened the night Frankenstein's monster lurched to life in the mind of Mary (Godwin) Shelley.

But the truth of what happened that wild weekend in Geneva is stranger than anything the eccentric filmmaker could imagine.

a friend that, "In our family, if you cannot write an epic poem or novel that by its originality knocks all other novels on the head, you are a despicable creature."

Byron was something else again, a curly-haired charmer with a penchant for writing ornate poems about doomed

and theater that lasted the rest of the century, until it was eclipsed, at last, by Bram Stoker's more famous blood-sucker, *Dracula*. But Mary Shelley's "hideous phantasm of a man," born that same wild weekend, still endures to this day.

—Ron Wolfe



Mary, Percy Bysshe Shelley, George Gordon, Lord Byron, Claire Clairmont, and Dr. Polidori were the seventeenth century's equivalent of the New Wave. They were smart. They were stylish. They were scandalous. They were broke. They spent the rainy summer of 1816 together in what Mary termed "conversation till the morning light" at Lord Byron's lodgings in Switzerland.

Shelley, as romantic a Romantic poet as they come, had a thing going for sixteen-year-old girls. Mary was sixteen when he met her; she was eighteen when they ran off to Lake Geneva together.

To complicate things, Mary's step-sister, Claire Clairmont, tagged along with the lovers.

Claire once complained to

lovers, and Polidori was a twenty-year-old med school graduate.

On the fateful night in question, Byron suggested they should have a contest at writing ghost stories.

"I busied myself to think of a story," Mary later recalled, "... one to curdle the blood."

Polidori, meantime, was having trouble of his own. A day or two after the contest had started, all he'd managed to write was a whine of despair in his diary: "The ghost stories are begun by all but me."

So he poached a tale that Byron had abandoned, *The Vampyre*, and later published it under Byron's name. Polidori tried for years to convince the public he didn't write the tale of the "Byronic" Lord Ruthven. It inspired a "vampire-mania" in fiction

RATS IN THE MALLS

Ruthless, feral creatures have invaded Beverly Center, one of the chic-est, glitziest of shopping malls near Beverly Hills. Not Romeroid zombies—rats.

"I don't think there is anything unusual about this," says Art Graham, president of the pest extermination company that has undertaken to rid the mall of rats. "I'm sure other shopping centers have this same problem from time to time."

But there *is* no other shopping place quite the same as Beverly Center: an eight-story, one-hundred-million-dollar extravaganza of trendiness.

Few other shopping malls could boast an eatery as absolutely "in" as the Hard Rock

Café, let alone a clientele of movie stars the glittery likes of Alley Sheedy, Terry Garr, and Jeff Goldblum.

And few would be less eager to boast of the center's other sort of clientele—the long-tailed, whiskered sort, those that skitter about in the rafters.

Some of the rats are roof rats, and some are Norway rats, the exterminators report. Norway rats are rattier of the two.

Graham, though, is undaunted. When it comes to pest control, "We are the best in the business. That's why we're there," he said.

Graham's company is the Miami, Fla.-based Bugs Burger Bug Killers, a subsidiary of Johnson Wax.

"We go all over the country on roaches, rats, and mice," he said. "Years ago, we did Underground Atlanta. We killed three-thousand. It made newspaper headlines."

Given the amount of construction going on around Beverly Center, Graham said he is not surprised that a rat would prefer the shopping mall to a hole in the ground.

"When you have a situation where you're digging up the ground, you're going to uproot rats and mice and other living organisms," he said.

Besides, there are more rats around than people think. Graham said: "The rule of thumb is one rat for every person in the United States, or in the world. And rats live very close to man."

As many as fifty Bugs Burger Bug Killer "service specialists" could be marshalled to confront the mall's unknown population of rats, but Graham said he doesn't expect the job to be that hard.

"We will use chemicals, and we will use other methods. We'll use traps," he said. "Our people will stay on the job until the problem is eradicated."

Take that, you dirty rat.

—Ron Wolfe

THE OTHER SIDE

WELCOME, CHAOS

You may be surprised to learn that even witches and warlocks have their differences. The "radical fringe" of the occult set are now practicing a trendy new kind of magic that does away with the dusty grimoires and complicated rituals of "traditional" magical practice. Called Chaos Magick, it grew out of the work of English artist, Austin Osman Spare (1888-1956). Spare's ideas went largely unappreciated in his lifetime. But in the mid-sixties, a younger generation of rebellious English occultists rediscovered his work.

Opposing Aleister Crowley and mainstream Western occultism, Spare asserted that robes and rituals were unnecessary and distracted man from his own divinity. Like Eastern occultists, Spare held that reality is ever-changing and beyond all definition—hence, "Chaos." Anticipating modern parapsychology, he maintained that the subconscious mind—constantly in touch with Chaos, from which it springs—is the true source of occult power. Magic,

he said, could best be worked by meditating on sigils: simple, self-created arrangements of letters whose stylized designs express desires to the subconscious while disguising their meanings to the conscious mind. Requiring only drawing implements and imagination, sigils can be worked anywhere. Spare's sigils resemble nothing so much as modern graffiti.

Believing that all deities and demons are symbolic images from the subconscious, Spare's successors are not completely averse to rituals. But the ceremony must be personally relevant to, if not actually created by, its celebrants. Even a pop icon like Superman or David Bowie could be invoked as a deity. And if one god doesn't work, you can always replace it with another.

The practitioner should not be surprised if the results are unpredictable, its adherents warn. After all, they say, the universe is Chaotic.

—Adrian Savage



PHOTO © 1983 VESTRON MUSICVIDEO INC.

ELEPHANT PARTS

John Merrick, the Englishman whose tragic deformity earned him the name of the "Elephant Man" at the turn of the century, has achieved bizarre new notoriety even after his death.

You'll recall that a couple of years ago, there were two competing film biographies of Merrick available to the public, one based on a stage play starring David Bowie, the other a Brooks-film production starring John Hurt, directed by David (Dune, Blue Velvet) Lynch.

Now, apparently, it's pop star Michael Jackson who wants a piece of the Elephant Man—literally. According to Jackson's manager Frank Dileo, Jackson has made a bid for Merrick's remains, which are currently on display at London Hospital Medical College where Merrick spent the last days of his life.

"Jackson has a high degree of respect for the

memory of Merrick," Dileo told a reporter for the *New York Post*. "He has read and studied all material about the Elephant Man, and has visited the hospital twice to see Merrick's remains."

"His fascination with their historical significance increased with each visit, along with hopes to add them to his collection of rare and unusual memorabilia at his California compound."

Jackson is known to be an avid collector of unusual material on unusual people. There are reportedly rooms in his home dedicated to Diana Ross, Liz Taylor, and Mickey Mouse.

Dileo stresses that Jackson's interest in Merrick's remains is only "as a devoted collector of art and antiques. He has no exploitative intentions whatsoever." Perhaps Jackson senses a kinship with another celebrity whose legend overshadowed his humanity.

—TK



THE OTHER SIDE

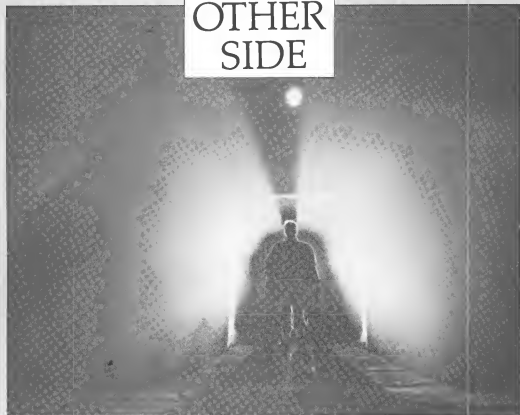


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VANISHING HITCHIKERS AND DEAD CATS

You've all heard them—bizarre tales of unlikely occurrences which are often told as true around campfires at summer camp. Whether it's "The Babysitter and the Man Upstairs," "The Hook," "The Choking Doberman," or "The Dead Cat in the Package," they're collectively known as urban legends, and have been circulating around the world for years.

In fact, several episodes of the original *Twilight Zone* series were inspired by urban legends, most notably the episode "Twenty-Two." Since 1980, three books recounting and analyzing these intriguing tales have seen print from Utah folklorist Jan Harold Brunvand, whose newspaper column, "Urban Legends," began appearing in papers across the country early this year.

"I have a degree in folklore," Brunvand explains, "and what I've always found is that students are more interested in their own traditions than in those from somewhere else, or another time and place. I got into this about 1980, looking over a folder of modern legends I'd used to kick off my folklore class and wondering how many of these stories are around."

There have been enough around to fill three books to date—*The Vanishing Hitchhiker*, *The Choking Doberman*, and the latest, *The Mexican Pet* (all but the last in trade paper from Norton). These volumes marked the first mass-market publications of a phenomenon which has been under study by folklorists since at least the 1940s. Brunvand explains that he is unsure who coined the term "urban legends" to apply to them. "We used to call them 'urban belief tales,'" he adds. "But they're not necessarily of the city."

The books proved successful enough to keep Brunvand busy on the talk-show circuit. He has appeared a half-dozen times on David Letterman's program, and has

recently appeared on the CBS Morning Program as well to talk about urban legend.

Where do they come from? One important source of material for Brunvand's books and columns is his readers. "I always ask people to send me stories and they do," he says. "I got one recently from a Methodist minister who told me that the 'Bump-in-the-Rug' story had appeared in the *Reader's Digest*. I checked it out and found that it had run in a California newspaper as a rumor that was going around, and he'd simply left that out and sent along the story. It's just further evidence of the oral transmission of these stories."

When asked if, like horror films, urban legends reflect the fears and concerns of their tellers at the time, Brunvand comments, "The difference is that people observe films for what they are, but they trust these stories as things that happened to a friend of a friend, and are often surprised to find that these things have multiple forms and widespread distribution."

Although many urban legends in circulation prove to be variations on long-running tales, there are new ones being generated now.

"One that I just did a column on is about AIDS," Brunvand explains. "In simplified form, a man meets a woman in a bar (not a prostitute), and she comes to his room, spends the night, and the next morning she's gone. He goes into the bathroom and there, on the mirror is written in lipstick, 'Welcome to the Wonderful World of AIDS.'"

Readers who have run across an intriguing tale of this type can pass it along to Brunvand for study at this address: Jan Harold Brunvand, Folklorist, Dept. of English, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, UT 84112.

—Tyson Blue